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The Function of Gift Exchange in Stendhal and Balzac

by

©

Doreen Faye Thesen

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Abstract

Twentieth-century French thinkers such as Marcel Mauss, Georges Bataille. Jean Baudrillard and Alain Caillé (a member of the MAUSS group, an acronym for Mouvement Anti-Utilitariste dans les Sciences Sociales) have launched repeated attacks on economism and proposed the gift as an alternative form of social regulation. In this thesis, a selection of writings by Stendhal and Balzac is studied to see how gift exchange functions in these authors' representations of France in the early nineteenth century, a period during which money emerged as a universal social mediator. The gift is studied from two main perspectives: true gift as a means of establishing a positive relationship and gift as a façade masking and facilitating commercial transactions.

Chapter 1 discusses what the gift reveals about gender relations in a money-dominated society in which males control wealth. Gifts *by*, *to* and *of* women are studied to provide insight into relations between the sexes and to see if giving is gendered in any way in the works selected. The first part of the second chapter examines the inequitable distribution of wealth and the gift as a vehicle by which to build a cohesive community. The second part of the chapter moves from the formation of bonds in a group situation to the role of the gift as a forger of bonds between two individuals. The function of the gift between those related genealogically is examined, but most of the discussion relates to characters with no genealogical ties and to the potential of the gift to draw them into the same family. Chapter 3 focuses on the question of legitimacy (a major topic of discussion in early nineteenth-century France) and on the gift considered as a form of sacrifice capable of bestowing legitimacy upon a character. The final chapter studies the gifted artist and scientist and their attempts to develop the gift and pass on the fruits of their efforts in the form of a gift.

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List of abbreviations

Stendhal[1] (1783-1842)

A: *Armance* (1827)(V 1)[2]

F: *Féder* (1839 incomplete)(V 2)

L: *Lamiel* (1842 incomplete)(V 2)

RN: *Le rouge et le noir* (1830)(V 1)

Balzac[3] (1799-1850)

B: *César Birotteau* (1837)(V 6)

Bx: *Béatrix* (1845)(V 2)

C: *Les chouans* (1829; revised 1834)(V 8)

CB: *La cousine Bette* (1846)(V 7)

CV: *Le curé de village* (1839)(V 9)

EG: *Eugénie Grandet* (1833)(V 3)

FT: *La femme de trente ans* (1842)(V 2)

G: *Pierre Grassou* (1839)(V 6)

IP: *Illusions perdues* (1843)(V 5)

La b: *La bourse* (1832)(V 1)

MC: *Le médecin de campagne* (1833)(V 9)

P: *Les paysans* (1844 incomplete; 1855)(V 9)

PC: *La peau de chagrin* (1831)(V 10)

PG: *Le père Goriot* (1835)(V 3)

R: *La rabouilleuse* (1842)(V 4)

RA: *La recherche de l'absolu* (1834)(V 10)

SM: *Splendeurs et misères des courtisanes* (1847)(V 6)

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[1] Stendhal, *Romans et nouvelles* (Paris: Bibliothèque de la Pléiade, 1952).

[2] The volume number of the *Pléiade* is shown in brackets.

[3] Honoré de Balzac, *La comédie humaine* (Paris: Bibliothèque de la Pléiade, 1977).

Introduction

The work of theorists such as Marcel Mauss, Georges Bataille, Jean Baudrillard and the MAUSS group reveals a strong presence in twentieth-century French thought of a discourse of anti-economism that promotes the gift as an alternative to the reductionist thought of a money-dominated society. But, we might ask, does this discourse appear only in the twentieth century, or does the gift already serve this critical function in the nineteenth century? In order to answer this question, I want to return to the early nineteenth century, a period in which money imposed itself for the first time in the role of a universal social mediator. The all-importance of money can be seen as much in the "Enrichissez-vous!" mentality advocated by François Guizot as in the protests from novelists like Stendhal and Balzac against the ever-increasing dominance of money in society. Balzac set himself the task of describing his money-dominated era in his novels--something which he accomplished, according to Friedrich Engels, better than the historians and economists of the period.[1]

I have chosen the novels of Stendhal and Balzac as the corpus for this study for two main reasons. First, both saw themselves as recreating the social structure of the early nineteenth century in their novels. They considered themselves to be moralists and recorders of what was actually happening in their society; they were intent on anchoring their fictional representations in as accurate a social context as possible in order to reveal the patterns of behaviour which they witnessed. Secondly, the corpus they left is extensive, and the works that I have selected provide a varied sampling of their representation of gift exchange. Although no evidence exists of any intentional use of gift exchange by Stendhal and Balzac as a mechanism to reveal relationships, it is such an obvious phenomenon in their novels (at times, almost obsessively so) that it merits closer examination: gift exchange undeniably forms an integral part of the social structure represented in the narratives. To provide a framework for my study of the gift in the construction of the narrative in the novels of Stendhal and Balzac, I shall draw upon twentieth-century studies and theories of gift exchange.

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[1] Pierre Barbéris, *Balzac et le mal du siècle: Contribution à une physiologie du monde moderne*, Tome 1: *1799-1829: Une expérience de l'absurde: aliénations et prises de conscience* (Paris: Gallimard, 1970) 758.

Anti-utilitarianism, which has been with us as long as utilitarianism,[2] has enjoyed a certain vogue in recent years as an alternative mode of thought to the dominance of economism.[3] Among its chief proponents are Alain Caillé and other participants in the *Bulletin du MAUSS.* (MAUSS is an acronym for *Mouvement Anti-Utilitariste dans les Sciences Sociales.*) The principal target of the attacks of the MAUSS group is what is perceived as the calculating egoism and rationalism of utilitarianism. In *Critique de la raison utilitaire: Manifeste du MAUSS*, Alain Caillé, for example, defines utilitarianism as

> toute doctrine qui repose sur l'affirmation que les sujets humains sont régis par la logique égoïste du calcul des plaisirs et des peines, ou encore par leur seul intérêt, et qu'il est bon qu'il soit ainsi parce qu'il n'existe pas d'autre fondement possible aux normes éthiques que la loi du bonheur des individus ou de la collectivité des individus.[4]

Caillé argues that the influential doctrine of Jeremy Bentham (1748-1832) and other advocates of utilitarianism is too restrictive. According to Caillé, the strong link between utilitarianism and economism has had a negative effect upon the expansion of knowledge; a switch must be made to anti-utilitarianism (which Caillé equates with anti-economism) in order to explore new areas of thought and escape the present stagnation. The ideas elaborated by the adherents of the MAUSS group and by like-minded commentators stem from a long tradition of anti-utilitarian thought in France. This current is represented by thinkers such as Marcel Mauss, Georges Bataille and Jean Baudrillard who, each in his own way, have formulated strong critiques of economism.

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[2] Alain Caillé, *Critique de la raison utilitaire: Manifeste du MAUSS* (Paris: La découverte, 1989) 11.

[3] Marc Guillaume attributes the present vitality of anti-utilitarianism to the decline in Marxism. Previously, much effort was spent in what Guillaume argues was a sterile debate between classical and Marxist views on economy--sterile because, according to Guillaume, the Marxist economy shares more or less the same utilitarian axiom. Marc Guillaume, "Les limites de l'utilitarisme," *Revue européenne des sciences sociales*, 82 (1988): 99.

[4] Caillé 17-18.

It is Marcel Mauss's name that serves as an acronym for Caillé's anti-utilitarian movement. Mauss, an anthropologist and author of *Essai sur le don* (1924), was greatly influenced by the sociologist Émile Durkheim (his uncle and mentor) and by the work of Bronislaw Malinowski. According to Durkheim, it is social relations, not economic concerns, that are of prime importance to humans. Malinowski arrives at similar conclusions based upon his study of the "primitive" inhabitants of the Trobriand Islands and their neighbours near New Guinea; he argues that it is a "preposterous . . . assumption that man, and especially man on a low level of culture, should be actuated by pure economic motives of enlightened self-interest."[5] According to Malinowski, the gardening done by the natives is tied to aesthetics, social prestige and custom; the goal is not to accumulate food out of need or for any reason connected with utility in a profit and loss sense: gain, from an economic perspective, provides no incentive to work.[6] Malinowski's analysis of the Kula exchange, which was to capture Mauss's attention, reveals similar principles. Red shell necklaces circulate in a clockwise direction among the islanders while white shell bracelets travel in the opposite direction. In the Kula exchange, which is entirely non-utilitarian, the objects are kept in perpetual motion. An islander is given a necklace or bracelet by one of his partners in the Kula system, but he is obligated by custom to pass it on within a certain (although unspecified) time period. Any indication of accumulation in a self-interested manner would be met with severe social censure; generosity is admired, and sharing is expected. While the chief periodically builds up a surplus through the gifts given to him, this does not constitute accumulation in an economic sense. The surplus is eliminated, rather than allowed to grow, through the chief's gifts which act to redistribute the wealth.

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[5] Bronislaw Malinowski, *Argonauts of the Western Pacific. An Account of Native Enterprise and Adventure in the Archipelagoes of Melanesian New Guinea*, pref. Sir James George Frazer (1922; London: Routledge, 1983) 60.

[6] The anthropologist Karl Polanyi supports Malinowski's findings. He quotes Malinowski and argues that "[t]he motive of gain is not 'natural' to man". "[M]an's economy, as a rule, is submerged in his social relationships. He does not act so as to safeguard his individual interest in the possession of material goods; he acts so as to safeguard his social standing, his social claims, his social assets." Karl Polanyi, *The Great Transformation* (Boston: Beacon, 1957) 269, 46.

Mauss uses Malinowski's study in support of his theory of the gift as an alternative to utilitarianism. Based upon three obligations which Mauss argues are inextricably linked to the gift as a social phenomenon--to give, to accept, to reciprocate--he develops a system of exchange that avoids the traps of utilitarian egoism. According to Mauss, the "poursuite brutale des fins de l'individu est nuisible aux fins et à la paix de l'ensemble, . . . et . . . à l'individu lui-même."[7] Giving a gift is a peace overture, and acceptance of the gift is an agreement to forego any hostile behaviour, whereas refusal of the gift is a declaration of war. Once the gift is accepted, the recipient is under an obligation to reciprocate, but the exchange differs radically from a commercial transaction in which an agreement is established that determines a fair return to the original owner of an object. In a gift exchange, no negotiations occur between the parties involved. The giver--whether in the initial instance or in the case of reciprocation--is left entirely free to choose the gift. What is to be given is never specified by the recipient, since gift exchange is a question of forming bonds with others, not a matter of maximizing profit. In a system founded upon the gift, goods, such as the armshells and necklaces in Malinowski's study of the Kula exchange, are put in permanent circulation and, at the same time, human relations are strengthened. If the groups studied do on occasion hoard, the goal is not self-interested accumulation; the surplus is built "pour dépenser, pour 'obliger' . . . on échange, mais ce sont surtout des choses de luxe . . . ou ce sont des choses immédiatement consommées, des festins."[8] In this regard, Mauss favours the potlatch as a type of gift that puts goods into circulation, a notion which is paramount in Georges Bataille's reading of Mauss's essay.

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[7] Marcel Mauss, "Essai sur le don: Forme et raison de l'échange dans les sociétés archaïques," *Sociologie et anthropologie*, intro. Claude Lévi-Strauss (1924; Paris: PUF, 1950) 272.

However, the theory of the potlatch elaborated by Bataille accentuates expenditure and loss rather than the redistribution of goods that was so appealing to Mauss. Contrary to philosophers, such as Marx, who emphasize scarcity and usefulness, Bataille stresses that the true fullness and richness of life lies in excess, expenditure and loss. According to Bataille, "[i]l n'existe en effet aucun moyen correct . . . de définir ce qui est utile aux hommes".[9] As an antidote to a consumption (*consommation* in French) linked to utility and whose goal is to increase production, Bataille favours *consumation*, which is an unproductive expenditure, as when an object is *consumed* in a fire, whence the importance of sacrifice and liberty that are found "dans la destruction, dont l'essence est de consumer *sans profit*".[10] For Bataille, the "don doit être considéré comme une perte et ainsi comme une destruction partielle".[11] Over and against the *restricted* economy that characterizes our modernity and which is tied to factors such as calculated returns, production, homogeneity, accumulation and scarcity, Bataille advocates a *general* economy that is very much its opposite. Bataille's general economy reflects his philosophical emphasis on sacrifice, death, destruction, heterogeneity, expenditure and surplus.

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[8] Mauss 271.

[9] Georges Bataille, *La part maudite* précédé de "La notion de dépense" (1949, 1933; Paris: Minuit, 1967) 25.

[10] Bataille 95.

[11] Bataille 34.

To Jean Baudrillard, who has been influenced by both Mauss's interpretation of the gift and Bataille's theory of *consumation* and of the *general* economy, the gift becomes an instance of symbolic exchange. Baudrillard argues that gift-giving is a matter of symbolic ambivalence--"amour et agression"[12]--and never a question of value (that is, according to him, always reified). Whereas Marx denounces the fetishism of merchandise and money, Baudrillard reproaches Marx himself for what he argues is a fetishism of use value and need. According to Baudrillard, needs, far from being natural, are determined by social relations and the exchange system. It is not a matter of consuming to meet basic biological needs; rather, consumption is intertwined with signs which are meant to establish differentiated social groups. A whole cult of difference based upon the consumption of signs has developed to fill the void created by the loss of a difference founded upon unexchangeable traits centred around one's birth. Baudrillard argues against the faulty premise that everything is possible through the consumption of signs.

> [P]artout les objets sont donnés et reçus comme dispensateurs de force (bonheur, santé, sécurité, prestige, etc.): cette substance magique partout répandue fait oublier que ce sont d'abord des signes, un code généralisé de signes, un code totalement arbitraire (*factice*, "fétiche") de différences, *et que c'est de là, et pas du tout de leur valeur d'usage, ni de leurs "vertus" infuses, que vient la fascination qu'ils exercent.*[13]

Success in the production and manipulation of signs translates into economic and political power. Baudrillard argues repeatedly that we do not consume to satisfy life-sustaining requirements; rather, consumption (*consommation*) is tied to the production of social signifiers or signs which, while they are meant to delineate differences, in reality produce homogenization. The arbitrariness of these signs is seen in their ephemerality and variability from one culture to another, as in the case of beauty. Use value (which Baudrillard links to an object's function and utility) and exchange value (which he equates with the economic and with a logic of equivalence) are surpassed; exchange occurs on the level of the sign. Baudrillard sees the transformation of use value or economic exchange value into exchange-sign value as a *transfiguration*, whereas when the movement is toward symbolic exchange, it becomes a question of *transgression*.[14] Symbolic exchange transcends all modes of value, and in the valueless domain it occupies symbolic exchange functions to solidify a relationship: in the case of the gift, between the giver and the recipient.[15] According to Baudrillard, "[s]euls les objets ou catégories de biens investis dans l'échange symbolique, singulier et personnel (le don, le cadeau) sont strictement incomparables. La relation personnelle (l'échange non économique) les rend absolument singuliers."[16] Baudrillard advocates a neutralization of use value, of economic exchange value and of exchange-sign value by symbolic exchange, which transgresses all value in its establishment of relations and pacts. In *Le miroir de la production*, Baudrillard cites Marshall Sahlins in support of his theory that the ideas of scarcity, necessity and lack are not natural to man; rather, they are a creation of economic exchange which emphasizes accumulation.[17] Sahlins situates the society of true abundance amongst a group of hunters and gatherers for whom accumulation is a foreign concept. They could choose agriculture and its greater material remuneration, but instead they prefer a continuation of their subsistence level of existence. Caillé, too, makes reference to Sahlins's study and points out the importance of leisure to the group: once a certain level that is necessary to sustain life has been achieved, work ceases.[18] As a result, less time is spent at work. Work in itself is a different concept for the primitive hunter/gatherer groups than for modern society; it is more of a social activity than work in the sense that we know it. According to Baudrillard, any semblance of accumulation on the part of primitive groups is actually aimed at activities such as feasts; it is not economic accumulation since the goal is always expenditure.

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[12] Jean Baudrillard, *Pour une critique de l'économie politique du signe* (Paris: Gallimard, 1972) 62.

[13] Baudrillard 100.

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[14] Baudrillard 146.

[15] Gift exchange plays a central role in Baudrillard's theory. For example, he writes, "*Prendre n'a jamais suffi à la jouissance.* Il faut pouvoir recevoir, donner, rendre, détruire--si possible tout ensemble." Baudrillard 261.

[16] Baudrillard 157.

[17] Jean Baudrillard, *Le miroir de la production ou l'illustration critique du matérialisme historique* (Tournai: Casterman, 1973) 46-47.

A recurrent theme in the arguments against economism involves the inseparability of economic interests from more widely encompassing social values.[19] The criticism which repeatedly surfaces--whether it be from Durkheim, Mauss, Bataille, Baudrillard, Caillé or others--is that economic elements are over-emphasized to the detriment of what the theorists argue are more important social concerns. A similar argument was made by Stendhal in *D'un nouveau complot contre les industriels* in 1825. Stendhal did not oppose economic development as such, but he did oppose the use of monetary wealth as a standard for measuring the success or importance of an individual, or of economic productivity as a standard for cultural production. Stendhal's viewpoint corresponds closely with the arguments of the twentieth-century anti-utilitarians: they are *not* strictly against utility. Guillaume describes Bataille as anti-utilitarist only in his desire to end the domination of economism,[20] and Caillé emphasizes that the *anti-utilitaire* is not to be equated with the *inutilitaire*.[21] Here, too, it is a matter of shifting priorities away from the pervasive influence of money to what Stendhal and the anti-utilitarians of the twentieth century argue are more important social concerns. For

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[18] Caillé 67.

[19] The arguments of the anti-utilitarians are supported by the historical research of Fernand Braudel who maintains that economic elements cannot be isolated from other factors; all are interconnected. Fernand Braudel, *Civilisation matérielle, économie et capitalisme: 15e-18e siècle,* Tome 3 (Paris: Armand Colin, 1979) 540.

[20] Guillaume 103.

[21] Caillé 130.

Balzac, too, "[l]es lois, les écrits, les moeurs puent l'argent."[22] Like Stendhal, he rejected profit and accumulation as an exclusive goal and mocked respect based solely upon an individual's wealth.

In this study, I go back about a century before Mauss wrote his seminal *Essai sur le don* to a selection of writings by Stendhal and Balzac that centre around the period from the latter part of the Bourbon Restoration (1814-1830) to the early part of the July Monarchy (1830-1848). My objective in studying the gift in the works of Stendhal and Balzac is to determine if these two early nineteenth-century novelists can in some ways be considered to be precursors of Mauss and of those who have continued his work; that is, to see if a connection can be made between their use of the gift (which is a recurrent motif in their novels) and the twentieth-century tradition of French thought which has systematically mobilized the notion of the gift as a means of mounting a critique of economism. One of the main thrusts of my study will be to ask if the representations of early nineteenth-century French society offered by Stendhal and Balzac mobilize the gift as a means of resisting or opposing the hegemony of money. Does the gift function as a tactic of resistance, or has it been masked/contaminated so that it serves economic interests?

Concern about the power exerted by money and about inequities in the distribution of wealth was not new to the early nineteenth century. For example, in the seventeenth century, La Bruyère had ridiculed the respect given wealthy people who were devoid of true merit and had decried extravagance and waste on the part of the rich while others were destitute. In the eighteenth century, Enlightenment thinkers had promoted liberty, equality and faith in the potentially limitless progress of humanity, but the liberty and equality advocated were not always complete; government by an enlightened despot was typically favoured over any form of democracy involving the masses who were still largely illiterate. For many, democracy was equated with the disruption and destruction of revolution.

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[22] Honoré de Balzac, "Complaintes satiriques sur les moeurs du temps présent," *Oeuvres complètes de Balzac,* Tome 22: *Oeuvres diverses* (Paris: Club de l'honnête homme, 1956) 261.

During the reigns of Louis XVIII (1814-1824) and Charles X (1824-1830), the vote was still restricted to the nobility and substantial property owners. Charles X's attempt in 1830 to reduce the voting privileges of those outside the nobility was one of the more immediate causes of the July Revolution. The upper bourgeoisie had established its economic control and, bent on the extension of its political power, was not about to forfeit what influence it already had. The bourgeoisie favoured the continuation of a constitutional monarchy and a representative assembly elected by major property owners, both of which would serve its interests better than a democratic republic. Louis-Philippe, who was from the Orleans family and had no legitimate claim to the throne, was made King of the French by the bourgeois. His accession signaled the definitive hegemony of the upper bourgeoisie in politics and the end of the political influence of the old nobility. The legitimate ruler from the Bourbon family, Charles X, had been unable either to maintain his position as King of France or to preserve the political power of the old aristocracy. The novels of Stendhal and Balzac fall largely within the Restoration period and the July Monarchy. In my discussion of their novels, I want to see how the gift functions in their representations of the social problems of the period and whether the gift offers any possible solutions to those problems.

The first chapter deals with the gift as a vehicle for the study of gender relationships in the male- and money-dominated society of the early nineteenth century, in which females were subjugated first to the will of their father and then to that of their husband. Divorce, which had been possible during the Revolutionary period and the Empire, was abolished in 1816 under the Restoration and was not to be reintroduced until 1884; thus, during the period described, no socially sanctioned route was open by which to leave a loveless marriage for one with a greater potential for happiness. In the texts, gift-giving frequently centres around marriage; typically, gifts are given from a suitor in exchange for the gift of a wife. My study examines a selection of these exchanges and attempts to differentiate between cases of genuine gift exchange and others in which exchange is tied to negotiation and is equivalent to a commercial transaction, even though, on a superficial level, the vocabulary and actions of the characters mask the payments as gifts. The interaction between gift and money in the novels as a means of highlighting gender relations is a constant concern. The value assigned to female characters through the various forms of capital (beauty, money and social status) that they possess is examined as are the roles (mother, virgin and prostitute) to which they are relegated (according to Luce Irigaray[23]) in a patriarchal society, like the one represented by Stendhal and Balzac. In this first chapter, I also study the way in which expectations of gift create a role for parents and define family relationships. Do social rules that dictate the movement of the gift reveal a different role for the mothers from that of the fathers? I also address the possibility of a person serving as a gift and, in such cases, try to determine what the gift of a person signifies. It is of interest to see what gifts *by* women, *to* women and *of* women reveal about relations between the sexes during this period and to determine if giving is gendered in any way in the novels selected for study.

Another social problem--probably the one that received the most attention from other writers of the period--is central to the second chapter: the inequitable distribution of wealth. The period is rich in suggestions from utopian visionaries like Fourier and the Saint-Simonians about how to create economic prosperity and happiness for the masses. The humanitarianism and optimism of the utopian writers of the early nineteenth century has its roots in eighteenth-century

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[23] Luce Irigaray, *Ce sexe qui n'en est pas un* (Paris: Minuit, 1977) 180-81.

Enlightenment thought which fostered the belief in the possibility of unlimited progress for mankind. My concern in Chapter 2 is with the gift as a possible vehicle for the redistribution of wealth and the establishment of bonds amongst people. The function of the gift is examined as represented in both utopian and historical terms in the novels; its function is also observed from the perspective of its effect upon group dynamics as well as its effect upon the relationship between two characters. In the case of gift exchange amongst the members of a group, the possible benefits of generalized exchange as opposed to those of restricted exchange are considered. Is the gift, as represented in the novels, instrumental in the establishment of a community in which cooperation and generosity flourish and, if so, what factors aid or hinder the gift's flow? Any interference from economic considerations that emphasize accumulation and self-interest is analyzed.

In Chapter 1, then, the gift's role in clarifying gender relationships is studied; in the first part of Chapter 2, the emphasis shifts (at least partially) to the gift's function in portraying the relationships among the social groups found in early nineteenth-century France: peasants, bourgeois and nobility. In the second part of Chapter 2, my study is directed more towards the flow of gift both within and outside the family. According to Pierre Bourdieu, the gift flows most freely amongst those related genealogically: the closer the genealogical connection, the more freely the gift flows.[24] In this section, I examine what the flow of gift and the restriction of its movement reveal about the relationships between family members in the novels; I also study what power is invested in the gift that moves between two characters with no genealogical connection. Of particular interest are the circumstances under which bonds form that bring two characters into the same

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[24] Pierre Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice*, trans. Richard Nice (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1977) 173.

"family". Where the gift acts to create bonds, the durability of any such bonds is studied to obtain some idea of the resistance that gift-related bonds possess when obstacles are encountered.

The third chapter looks at sacrifice as a particular type of gift. Mark Anspach, a member of the MAUSS group, draws a parallel between sacrifice as a gift to the gods and the gift as a sacrifice of oneself. In support of his theory that gift is connected with sacrifice, Anspach cites Mauss who writes "on *se* donne en donnant"[25]. Sacrifice serves two main purposes: first, it is through the sacrifice of a part of one's wealth that the violence of envious people can be avoided; secondly, sacrifice can provide the means to redistribute wealth. (The obvious example is the sacrifice of an animal whose meat is then given to the poor.) Examples of sacrifice, as a narrative mechanism that instantiates relationships, occur in every chapter of this study: in the first chapter, women sacrifice themselves for the welfare of others; in the second, individuals sacrifice themselves for the benefit of a group; in the fourth and final chapter, artists and scientists sacrifice themselves in an attempt to develop their gifts which they wish to share with others. In the third chapter, some specific cases of sacrifice in which an individual character is prepared to end her/his life prematurely are examined to see if the action can be interpreted as a gift or if it conforms more closely to a simple act of despair. In particular, I look at the gift as self-sacrifice as a possible means of bestowing legitimacy upon a character.

Legitimacy was a topic that was vigorously debated throughout the early nineteenth century in France, a period of radical transition. Under the feudal system that had endured for centuries, the basis of legitimacy was birth: innate qualities which ennobled an individual were transmitted following the blood line, like a gift which was passed from one generation to the next. Everyone was aware of his duties, rights and position in society, and economic exchanges were entwined with social relations. For example, charity, a means of redistributing wealth, was expected from the nobility. This strong interconnection between social and economic aspects, with the economic subordinated to the social, is supported by the research of Karl Polanyi who categorizes the emphasis on the economic--which became apparent in the nineteenth century--as an anomaly. According to Polanyi, "normally, the economic order is merely a function of the social, in which it is contained. . . . Nineteenth century society, in which economic activity was isolated and imputed to a distinctive economic motive, was, indeed, a singular departure."[26]

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[25] Mauss 227 quoted in Mark Rogin Anspach, "Le don paisible?" *Bulletin du MAUSS* 11 (1984): 34.

The bourgeoisie, with all its money and influence, did not suddenly appear at the beginning of the nineteenth century; a long period of slow transition preceded the rapid changes which occurred after the Revolution and resulted in the consolidation of bourgeois economic and political power and its general hegemony in society. Merchants had increased in importance (and wealth) during the Middle Ages and, as early as the seventeenth century, the distinction between nobles and bourgeois was not as clear as it had been. Little by little, the wealthiest bourgeois had been using their money to become part of the nobility through the purchase of land, titles or marriage partners. In 1660, it was estimated that only one in twenty nobles could trace his origins to the Middle Ages.[27] The long-standing practice in French society of buying nobility did not diminish with the French Revolution; Hobsbawm estimates that half of those claiming noble status in 1840 were commoners in 1789.[28] Although the purchase of nobility raised questions about legitimacy (for example, is legitimacy an innate quality or does it have a price tag?) that accelerated the demise of the old system, members of the new nobility also tended to slow the changes that were occurring: their aim was to perpetuate the privileges that the nobility then enjoyed. Legitimacy is a typically modern question, since previously everyone had known his position, and it had not been an issue. Enlightenment thought of the eighteenth century opposed the recognition of nobility based upon birth and, in its place, suggested that the determination of a noble individual be related to personal merit; but the problem with personal merit was that it was open to assessment, whereas legitimacy passed along blood lines had been accepted as a given. In this respect, the French Revolution only accelerated a process already begun; feudalism was eliminated and, by 1830, birth ceased to provide the stability in interpersonal relations that it once had. In the early nineteenth century, still influenced by Enlightenment thought, writers like Stendhal and Balzac considered the possibility of an aristocracy of character rather than of birth. In their novels, such an aristocracy of character encounters repeated opposition from an aristocracy of money. In instances which involve the gift, it is of interest to see what resistance the gift offers in the novels to the ever-increasing dominance and power of money in society. In this regard, I examine the qualities that bestow nobility upon a character under the new order that is represented.

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[26] Polanyi 71.

[27] Larry W. Riggs, "The Issues of Nobility and Identity in *Dom Juan* and *Le bourgeois gentilhomme*," *French Review* 59 (1986): 400.

[28] E. J. Hobsbawm, *The Age of Revolution 1789-1848* (1962; London: Sphere, 1989) 226.

The characters of Stendhal and Balzac differ from those of an author like Chateaubriand, who experience ennui, powerlessness, inactivity and nostalgia. Characters like Julien Sorel express regret that they are living during the 1820s, but they typically display great optimism and ambition. For Julien, Napoleon and the other commoners who rose to prominence under him serve as proof of what is possible. If it is true that Julien Sorel and Lucien Chardon de Rubempré experience moments of anxiety, they also exhibit great energy, dynamism and intensity. They are aware that they are different and that it is their personal merit which distinguishes them rather than birth. Unlike the stereotype of the bourgeois, these heroes are not interested solely in the accumulation of wealth. Even a character such as Lucien Chardon de Rubempré, who is enticed by money, has the higher goal of membership in the nobility. On the surface, they may appear defeated by the "Enrichissez-vous" mentality encouraged by Guizot, but I explore more closely the possibility of another interpretation which sees them defy and question a society in which money determines social relations.

In the final chapter, the gift is studied in relation to the innate talent possessed by certain characters and their attempts to pass on the gift in the form of the product of their own interior gift: poetry, painting, sculpture and scientific discovery. Pierre Abraham explains that the word *artist* extended around 1830 to include a wide range of creative individuals such as Napoleon, Newton, Descartes and Gutenberg.[29] In Chapter 4, the artist figure is limited to the poet, novelist, sculptor and painter; representations of the scientist are dealt with separately. Particular attention will be paid in this chapter to the interplay between money and the gift. In this regard, there are numerous matters of interest: the obstacles that the artist/scientist encounters; what flows back to the artist/scientist in return for the gift; the intrinsic value of art/science versus its commercial value; the place of the artist/scientist in a society centred around economic interests; cultural/scientific creation versus economic production; sources of funding at a time when the traditional sources from affluent patrons are no longer available; the role of women in art during the early nineteenth century; the influence money has upon a character's tendency to pursue the gift (that is, to develop the gift in order to be able to pass it on through what is created by her/his efforts). On the macro level, Fernand Braudel has demonstrated the lack of historical correlation between a centre of commercial wealth and one of cultural renown. He cites the examples of

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[29] Pierre Abraham, éd., *Manuel d'histoire littéraire de la France: 1789-1848,* Tome 4 (Paris: Éditions sociales, 1972) 623.

Venice and England which dominated the commercial realm at the same time as Florence and France, respectively, were recognized as the major cultural centres. The United States is another example which Braudel gives to support his theory that commercial domination does not translate automatically into cultural wealth.[30] On the micro level, it is of interest to see whether a similar pattern occurs in the novels. Does the gift flourish in the presence of money, or is it more likely to be extinguished, or at least partially thwarted, by wealth?

* * *

At this point, I should like to make clear the theoretical and methodological relationship between the models which have been applied to "primitive" societies and the heuristic use I am making of them in the framework of nineteenth-century France. In particular, the models based on non-European societies present a gift exchange system which is not "capitalist" in nature. The gift exchange systems in the novels I am studying are at one and the same time descriptive (they show how things are) and subversive (they undermine dominant gift relations by exposing their true motivations). In this latter sense, the subversive aspects of the gift exchange systems in these novels are closer to the "primitive" systems because they reject the dominant, hegemonic capitalist system of gift exchanges. The use of the models taken from primitive societies highlights the way in which capitalist society influences the gift exchange; the contamination brought to gift exchange by capitalistic values is thus made clearer.

My contention is that insights drawn from twentieth-century French thinkers can shed light on the representations that centre around gift exchange in the novels of Stendhal and Balzac. A sharp dichotomy arises here between the economic on the one hand and the non-economic on the other. (Social relations which involve the gift fall into the category of the non-economic.) Objectivity characterizes the economic order: a precise calculation can be made of business profit and loss; an accurate inventory can be done of material accumulation; personal prominence or status based on monetary wealth has an undeniably objective determination. On the other hand, subjectivity is the mark of the non-economic order: joy and communal bonds, for example, cannot be measured and itemized in the same way as sales.

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[30] Braudel 52-54.

I use models selected from anthropology and the social sciences as the principal theoretical support to defend my arguments about what occurs in the novels. Use of these models lays the foundation for a closer understanding of the function of the gift, for instance, as a means of facilitating interpersonal relations between two individuals and developing communal sentiments when interaction in a group is involved. Whereas the economic, with its attendant objectivity, takes the forefront in capitalism and Marxism, the models I have selected relegate economic exchange to a subcategory of social relations; normalization or naturalization of the economic as a category in its own right is rejected. The concepts elaborated question whether everything can be brought within the sphere of economic exchange and whether everything necessarily becomes merchandise. In direct opposition to economic exchange which would quantify everything, the models I have selected from anthropology and the social sciences are ideally suited to conveying the idea of quality. They lay the basis for an invitation to explore the valueless realm of symbolic exchange (as defined by Jean Baudrillard). Such studies and theories endorse the idea that some elements of life remain exterior to economic evaluation; efforts to affix a price tag prove meaningless because it is impossible to price/value them in economic terms. I make use of these models to support my observations about the fictional representations of the gift in relation to elements such as love, communal bonds, "family" ties, legitimacy, art and scientific research. At times, the thoughts of the novelists themselves appear to run parallel to the theories expounded. In 1810, for instance, Stendhal is very close to the emphasis of a Georges Bataille on the joy to be experienced through loss, when he reflects: "Si j'emprunte 10 000 fr. et que je les jette à la mer, à qui fais-je du mal? A moi? Non, je jouis."[31] A liberating energy is generated from the pure loss of throwing money into the sea.

My intent is to use pre-existing models such as the Kula exchange to furnish insights about what happens in the novels. I do not claim to be establishing a direct correspondence but rather seek to use the models as a heuristic guide in order to build a model of the gift exchange that is represented in the narratives of Stendhal and Balzac. Although no one-to-one correspondence can be established, the work of the anthropologists and theorists serves as a bridge to conceptualize what occurs in the novels. The nineteenth-century French society represented in the novels by Stendhal and Balzac is not the "primitive" tribal society of the Pacific (Kula system) or of the North American potlatch. A direct parallel cannot be drawn between the superstitions and customs of a primitive group that lives on a subsistence level and the beliefs and prejudices of an agrarian society that has witnessed the formal abolition of feudalism by means of revolution but has not entirely dissociated itself from the socio-economic structure which had formed the basis of society for generations. (The gap that separates French society at the end of the twentieth century from that at the beginning of the nineteenth century is also huge. In the early nineteenth century, France's economy was still based mainly upon agriculture. Industry was starting to emerge, but it was still very much in its infancy and not at all on the scale that it was in England, where the Industrial Revolution was well underway. When Stendhal makes reference to industrialists in *D'un nouveau complot contre les industriels*, he does not use the word with the same connotations it has today; the word *industrialist*, at the time, was used to designate anyone engaged in economic activity.)

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[31] Stendhal, "Traité d'économie politique," *Oeuvres complètes*, Tome 45: *Mélange I: Politique, histoire, économie politique*, éds. Victor Del Litto et Ernest Abravanel (Genève: Slatkine Reprints, 1986) 127.

A radical shift is necessary to move from the cultural context of a "primitive" tribe to that of early nineteenth-century France, which was separating itself from the remnants of a traditional society still related to feudalism. In the society described by Mauss, all aspects of life are melded into an integrated social whole; it is not possible to separate completely all economic elements since they are largely components of the main social category. In the early nineteenth century, at the same time as French society was grappling with the disappearance of a hierarchy founded upon birth, there was an increasing awareness--as reflected in the writing of Stendhal and Balzac--of the power of money, which was now seen as pervading all aspects of society. Much of the opposition to money that occurs in the period represented by Stendhal and Balzac centres around the realization that the economic was no longer a minor sub-category of a greater social whole; indeed, it was in this period that people became fully cognizant that the economic had become autonomous.

In the twentieth century, the sharp distinction between the economic and the social is considered normal or natural by the majority, but given the financial and social crises of modern Western society, it is of interest to listen to what the anti-utilitarians suggest by way of alternatives. According to Philippe Zarifian and Christian Palloix, a fetishization of the economy has occurred which has made it the new religion of our era that must be demystified.[32] André Gorz also argues strongly against our obsession with money and the economy. He contrasts the category of *the sufficient* with the economic terms *more* and *less* used by accountants, linking *the sufficient* to traditional society in which people accepted the place assigned to them at birth and did not expect more.[33] He does not express nostalgia for feudalism or tribal groups; instead, he envisions new frontiers and advocates "the transition from a productivist work-based society to a society of liberated time in which the cultural and the societal are accorded greater importance than the economic."[34] According to Gorz, " '[t]he market-based order' is fundamentally challenged when people find out that not all values are quantifiable, that money cannot buy everything and that what it cannot buy is something essential, or is even *the* essential thing."[35] For Gorz, the gift, which involves unconditional giving, is a means of setting up enduring relationships. Economic exchange is excluded from what transpires amongst members of a family or community. On the one hand, negotiations are absent from gift exchanges which involve the creation of bonds and obligations; on the other, no obligations exist on the side of either party in an economic exchange once the negotiated transaction is complete. (The example provided by Gorz is that of the worker who has completed a specified task and has been paid an agreed sum.)[36]

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[32] Philippe Zarifian and Christian Palloix, *La société post-économique* (Paris: Harmattan, 1988) 8-9. Both Zarifian and Palloix have a training in economics.

A criticism that is sometimes made of the gift as an alternative to utilitarianism is that the gift is not free from self-interest. Jacques Derrida, for example, claims that Mauss speaks of everything but the gift.[37] Self-interest occurs in the give-accept-reciprocate cycle since something invariably circulates back to the giver, who is never completely disinterested. What the giver receives may be merely in the form of personal satisfaction for having helped another, or it may be more material, yet the fact remains that the gift which, by definition, is supposedly free, is not without recompense. But does it matter if the gift is not free? The theory promoted by anti-utilitarians (such as Caillé) contains a definitive response to the accusation that the gift is not a true alternative due to its element of self-interest: self-interest is acceptable as long as it does not become the sole driving force with all else revolving around it.

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[33] André Gorz, *Critique of Economic Reason*, trans. Gillian Handyside and Chris Turner (London: Verso, 1989) 112.
[34] Gorz 183.
[35] Gorz 116.
[36] Gorz 167, 140.
[37] Jacques Derrida, *Donner le temps. 1. La fausse monnaie*. (Paris: Galilée, 1991) 39.

In Mauss's give-accept-reciprocate cycle, the giver does not emphasize the receipt of something in return, or negotiate such a repayment; instead, the emphasis is upon the creation of amicable relations. From Mauss's perspective, the goal of the giver is not to receive but to force another into giving--two motives which are quite different.[38] The obligation attached to the gift is considered a positive and necessary component in the establishment of relationships. It is of some interest to see if the gift, in the novels by Balzac and Stendhal, plays an important part in the formation of bonds in society and if it provides a type of resistance to the economic order; or if, on the contrary, the function of the gift is closer to the dominant ideology of the merchant society in which the novels are set. Much has been written about gift exchange amongst "primitive" peoples based upon anthropological studies like the one by Malinowski which inspired Mauss. (Other anthropologists who have made scholarly contributions in the area of gift exchange are Karl Polanyi and Claude Lévi-Strauss.) A great deal has also been said about the representation of money, particularly in the novels of Balzac; but little has been done in the area of the gift in the novels of Stendhal and Balzac. It is my intention to fill this gap.

In my selection of readings from Stendhal and Balzac, I have attempted to impose certain constraints. (The list of abbreviations which precedes this introduction provides a summary of the works that I shall be studying.) First, I have chosen works which deal with France, and secondly, I have restricted the period represented to the early nineteenth century, a period in which economism came under concerted attack for the first time. In this way, I hope to study Stendhal's and Balzac's representations of gift exchange and its interaction with money in a French society which was being rapidly restructured. As a result, works such as Stendhal's *La Chartreuse de Parme* (set in Italy) and Balzac's *Le chef d'oeuvre inconnu* (set in seventeenth-century France) have been omitted. Other possible selections, such as Balzac's *Le cousin Pons*, are not examined simply in order to keep this study a reasonable length. My aim is to provide a representative sample of the interplay between the influences of money and the functions of the gift; my analysis does not pretend to be an all-inclusive examination of the gift as it is represented in the complete works of Stendhal and Balzac. In this respect, it should serve as much as a starting point for further studies as a continuation of earlier ones.

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[38] Michele H. Richman, "Ch. 1: Formulating Categories," *Reading Georges Bataille: Beyond the Gift* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins U, 1982) 35.

Chapter 1 Woman as a Giver, as a Gift and as a Gift-Recipient

The gift in this chapter will be examined from the perspective of gender. Gifts *to* women will be studied in an attempt to determine whether they are truly gifts (and not commercial transactions), while gifts *of* women will receive particular attention since they can tell us a great deal about the status and function of women within the market exchanges of the patriarchal society described by Stendhal and Balzac.[1] A constant concern will be to analyze the very different mediating roles played by, respectively, gifts and commercial exchange in the formation and evolution of relationships between men and women. Before looking at women circulating on the marriage market and on the courtesan exchange, it will be instructive to consider the ways in which gifts *by* women are portrayed. In this way, it should be possible to establish whether or not the representation of gifts and giving is gendered in any constant and definable ways.

Woman as a Giver

To begin my study of gifts by women in the novels, I want to examine briefly three minor characters (Catherine [CV], Denise [CV] and Agathe [MC]) who exemplify self-abnegation. In *Le curé de village*, Catherine's gift of devoted care to an elderly sick woman prolongs her separation from her son (Benjamin) and lover (Farrabesche). When no return gift flows to her, the ingratitude of the recipient--in addition to the generosity of the original gift--is underscored.

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[1] In this chapter, theoretical support and insight will be derived mainly from the work of Luce Irigaray, in particular her book *Ce sexe qui n'en est pas un* (Paris: Minuit, 1977), and to a lesser extent upon others such as Thorstein Veblen (*The Theory of the Leisure Class* [1899; NY: Penguin, 1979]) and Claire Goldberg Moses (*French Feminism in the Nineteenth Century* [Albany: State U of NY P, 1984]). I do not intend to include a discussion of the anthropological research that has been done with regards to the various patterns of exchange that involve the gift of women among groups. Although the work of Bronislaw Malinowski, Claude Levi-Strauss and others in this area is interesting, it does not have any direct role in my explanation of the mechanisms that govern the gift of women in nineteenth-century France.

Catherine also gives abundantly to Farrabesche and her affection is reciprocated. Not only does she give food to Farrabesche when he is in hiding and money when he is in prison (the gift's spirit continues to flow since Farrabesche saves the money for Benjamin rather than spending it), but it is Catherine's intention to keep giving to him: "j'espère pouvoir lui rendre autant de bonheur qu'il a eu de peine" (CV 830). This sincere pledge from a poor woman to give happiness without any mention of material wealth reinforces her image as a giver to whom capitalism is a foreign concept.

The second character, Denise Tascheron (also in *Le curé de village*), provides us with a portrait of an ideal gift-giver. Denise is just as much a giving person as Véronique (the novel's principal character) and is an even more utopian example of a perfect giver; her giving remains unblemished whereas Véronique's falters with regard to Denise's brother, as will be seen in the next chapter. She lacks the resources to give on a scale equivalent to Véronique and thus does not enjoy the same widespread renown, but still her benevolence is recognized. "Denise, martyre de son amour fraternel" (CV 718), refuses her father's offer to contribute to Tascheron's legal expenses because the hostility he has displayed makes him unworthy to be a giver of gifts in this instance: the sentiments expressed by the giver must be appropriate or the gift risks being rejected. His harsh words about his son, whom he ostracizes from the family because of his criminal act, serve to exclude him (rather than his son) from the inner gift-giving family circle.

The money Denise has for the lawyer is like a gift which bounces from one recipient to another, functioning in the text to underscore the generosity and merit of each as s/he passes it on. There is a hint that the money was originally a gift to Denise, but she does not say from whom. Her presentation of the money to the lawyer is akin to a gift rather than a payment for commercial services, and he recognizes her generosity: ". . . je viens pour nous acquitter envers vous, autant que l'argent peut acquitter une dette éternelle. . . . Gardez, dit l'avocat, gardez cet argent pour vous, ma pauvre fille, les riches ne paient pas si généreusement une cause perdue" (CV 740). When Denise persists, the lawyer shows his own generosity in trying to pass on the gift by giving half the money to Bonnet for alms and offering Denise the other half for her cross to keep as a remembrance of her goodness. Denise's gift of her cross is in keeping with her virtuous character, as is Bonnet's acceptance of the money. The priest resolves the problem of who should have the gift by ensuring that it is used as a gift to the poor and to pay for Tascheron's burial; the church here acts as a vehicle for the redistribution of wealth.

The third minor character to display great generosity, Agathe, Benassis's lover in *Le médecin de campagne,* exemplifies the case of a woman who is completely altruistic in her love. As Benassis explains to Genestas: "Pour elle, le plus violent des chagrins était de me voir désirer quelque chose qu'elle ne pouvait me donner à l'instant . . . les dévouements de la femme sont sublimes!" (MC 547). Wealthy now from an inheritance and unaware that Agathe is pregnant, Benassis abandons her in the hope of making "une belle alliance" (MC 548). Agathe has sacrificed so much for him and does nothing to interfere with his selfish plans until she is dying and writes to give him their son: "j'appris à connaître le prix d'un coeur dévoué. . . . Après m'avoir donné sa foi de jeune fille, Agathe avait encore trouvé dans son coeur la foi de la mère à me livrer" (MC 552-53). Benassis realizes too late the extent of Agathe's generosity and the amount of his loss of personal happiness.

Each of the preceding minor female characters is a condensed version of what is developed in a more expanded form in principal female characters, particularly in the case of those created by Balzac: their whole existence in the novels is defined in terms of their gift-giving. In contrast, none of the male characters is defined solely in terms of his gift-giving. A positive image is created when the woman is a generous gift-giver and a distinctly negative image when she is not. Woman as mother is especially tied to the role of a gift-giver.

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While it is true that many mothers who appear in the novels show a great capacity for giving, it is equally true that other characters, who are not mothers, also demonstrate extreme self-abnegation; when they do, they are often described in maternal terms. It is as if, in the novels, to be a mother were to be a giver, and vice versa. Benassis, for instance, describes his own giving in maternal terms: "J'avais goûté aux cruelles délices de la maternité, je résolus de m'y livrer entièrement, d'assouvir ce sentiment dans une sphère plus étendue que celle des mères, en devenant une soeur de charité pour tout un pays" (MC 574). Bonnet, in *Le curé de village*, is another who likens himself to a mother, that of Tascheron who was born in the bosom of his church. He uses the comparison to show his affinity with the young man in an effort to explain his reluctance to accompany him to his execution: "On ne saurait exiger cela d'une mère" (CV 725). Similarly Carlos Herrera,[2] in *Splendeurs et misères des courtisanes*, is referred to at least three times in maternal terms. Afflicted with enormous anguish at Lucien's death, he murmurs "Oh! mon fils!" (SM 816) and explains: "[M]essieurs, . . . Ce coup est pour moi bien plus que la mort, mais vous ne pouvez pas savoir ce que je dis. . . Vous n'êtes pères, si vous l'êtes, que d'une manière; . . . je suis mère, aussi!. . ." (SM 817). Such is his grief that the former convict, who has been presented in this novel as well as in *Le père Goriot* as a ruthless, cold, calculating man of iron, collapses "[a]près avoir couvé Lucien par un regard de *mère* à qui l'on arrache le corps de son fils" (SM 821, my italics). In his own words: "jamais une bonne mère n'a tendrement aimé son fils unique comme j'aimai cet ange" (SM 898).

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[2] Trompe-la-Mort, Vautrin and Carlos Herrera are all aliases for the convict character Jacques Collin.

Herrera expresses scorn for women with the exception of mothers. He points to his own willingness to sacrifice himself for Lucien and to Lucien's courageous effort to obtain money for Coralie's burial by writing joyful songs even though he was stricken with grief. He contrasts these signs of strength with Esther's weakness, accusing her of being "une misérable femelle" and of loving "en femelle" (SM 613). Herrera calls upon her to become a mother capable, like him, of giving and devotion: "l'amour, chez une courtisane, devrait être, comme chez toutes les créatures dégradées, un moyen de devenir mère, en dépit de la nature qui vous frappe d'infécondité!" (SM 613). It must be remembered, however, that Herrera does not care about Esther, an expendable item who has been preserved only because of Lucien's affection and whom Herrera wants to sell for the services she can provide. Women are interchangeable commodities, and Esther is just as replaceable as Coralie, Lucien's former great love, had proved to be. The only thing which distinguishes women is their position in society: Esther cannot be substituted for Clotilde de Grandlieu because she lacks the family ties (that is, the social capital) necessary to augment Lucien's position in the nobility. Another woman of noble birth, however, is substitutable for Clotilde, as will be discussed shortly.

The image of the mother-giver appears again in Asie's criticism of the lack of gift on the part of Mme de Sérisy, Lucien's former mistress: "C'est si bon d'être à la fois mère et maîtresse! Vous autres, vous laissez crever de faim les gens que vous aimez sans vous enquérir de leurs affaires" (SM 744). According to Asie, to love is to give as a mother would give, a kind of love exemplified by herself and by Esther, who is transformed in the end into a total giver. Similarly, Lucien in *Illusions perdues*, equates Coralie--the other young woman who gives herself wholly--to a maternal giver. He reflects upon "cet amour maternel" (IP 417) when Coralie secretly replaces the money in his purse that he loses gambling.

The representation of giving in the novels is, then, indeed gendered: women are defined as givers, while some men (Benassis, Bonnet, Herrera) even see themselves as mothers because of their caring attitude and willingness to give.[3] On the one hand, giving seems to come naturally to many of the women represented, but on the other hand, it is made clear that some have been conditioned by the patriarchal society in which they live to give and to put the needs and desires of others ahead of their own. Whereas the father is usually held accountable by the narrator and by other characters for the satisfaction of his family's material needs, the mother is expected to fulfill more widely encompassing obligations; she is defined by the care she gives others. In fact, when a woman is not a giver, she tends to be a degraded representative of her sex, as will be demonstrated by characters such as Valérie (CB).

Part of the explanation for both authors' fascination with mothers can be found in their personal lives; each had an idealized image of the mother as someone who was loving and giving. Even in later life, Balzac felt his own mother was delinquent in her duties as a mother because of the lack of support that (in his opinion) she provided him and the favouritism that she showed her younger son (born of an adulterous relationship). Stendhal, on the other hand, experienced a lifelong feeling of loss after the death of his own mother during his childhood. In some ways, Mme de Rênal can be seen as an idealization of the mother he lost. I shall return to Mme de Rênal as a mother and giver in Chapter 3, but in the remainder of this chapter I want to consider the ways in which the representation of woman as a gift and as a recipient of gifts in the patriarchal society of the novels functions as an effect or reflection of social status.

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[3] Women cast in a nurturing role (as already discussed with regard to some minor female characters--Catherine [CV], Denise [P] and Agathe [MC]) will be discussed later in this chapter with characters such as Adeline (CB); women portrayed in a caring, giving capacity will also appear in Chapter 3 on sacrifice with characters such as Mme de Rênal (RN), Armance (A) and Esther (SM).

Woman as a Gift and as a Gift-Recipient

Whereas the image of the ideal woman created in the novels of Balzac and Stendhal is often one of generosity and caring, from the perspective of the characters, woman is still typically regarded as a commodity or at best as a being inferior to man. Writing in the 1970s, Luce Irigaray offers an insightful perspective as to what happens in a patriarchy, like the one examined here: "la femme est traditionnellement valeur d'usage pour l'homme, valeur d'échange entre les hommes. Marchandise, donc."[4] For example, Rigou, the usurer in *Les paysans*, abuses his position of monetary power to obtain pretty young girls; Annette is the tenth in a series to be promised marriage should Mme Rigou die. In Rigou's comparison of Annette to a horse to be exchanged for another, woman degenerates from a human to an animal/object. Annette, however, is slyer than her predecessors (as is shown by her ability both to stay on longer and also to have a relationship with Jean-Louis Tonsard which Rigou does not even suspect) and offers some (albeit covert) resistance to the patriarchal system. Rigou may think she is a commodity who is easily deceived, but he is the real dupe.

Philippe Bridau, in *La rabouilleuse*, also speaks of women in a very demeaning manner, placing them in the same category as horses. Deserted by Mariette for a wealthy duke, Philippe, whose inherent ruthlessness seems to grow as a result, proposes beating women in order to control them: "c'est pourtant la seule manière de gouverner les femmes et les chevaux. Un homme se fait ainsi craindre, aimer et respecter. . . . Les femmes sont des *enfants méchants*, c'est des *bêtes inférieures* à l'homme" (R 488-89, my italics). Philippe's belief in the superiority of men and in the subordinate role to be assigned to women leaves little possibility for building a relationship of voluntary cooperation and trust between the sexes in which enduring bonds of love might be nurtured.

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[4] Irigaray 30.

Another male character who considers women inferior is M. de Rênal, whose short-sighted patriarchal perspective on women prevents him from interpreting situations correctly. For instance, when his wife goes to bed complaining of a headache, he fails to see that fear of Julien's departure is the cause of her behaviour: "Voilà ce que c'est que les femmes . . . il y a toujours quelque chose de dérangé à ces *machines* compliquées" (RN 284, my italics). When Stanislas-Xavier is ill, she effectively confesses her adultery ("Apprends toute la vérité. C'est moi qui tue mon fils. . . . Le ciel me punit" [RN 323]), but her husband again misreads what is happening: "Idées romanesques, s'écria-t-il . . . Idées romanesques que tout cela!" (RN 323). Later, when she presents Rênal with the anonymous letter that she had Julien compose and demands Julien's dismissal, her strategy meets with success because she is astute in evaluating her husband whereas he continues to underestimate her: "Quel bon sens peut-on espérer d'une femme? Jamais vous ne prêtez attention à ce qui est raisonnable; comment sauriez-vous quelque chose? votre nonchalance, votre paresse, ne vous donnent d'activité que pour la chasse aux papillons, êtres faibles et que nous sommes malheureux d'avoir dans nos familles!" (RN 338).

Mathilde is very conscious of the social distance separating her from Julien, oscillating in her reasoning between rejecting him as unworthy or accepting him as an outward display of her heroism, but it is never an issue for Mme de Rênal. She is, however, capable of using it to her advantage, knowing the importance "la naissance" (RN 341) plays in her husband's view of the world. In an attempt to allay Rênal's suspicions about her adulterous relationship with Julien, she adopts his way of referring to the latter as "[c]e petit paysan" (RN 283) while presenting herself and her husband as the magnanimous gift-giving nobility: "Ce petit paysan que nous avons comblé de prévenances et même de cadeaux . . . il peut être savant, vous vous y connaissez, mais ce n'est au fond qu'un véritable paysan. Pour moi, je n'en ai jamais eu bonne idée depuis qu'il a refusé d'épouser Élisa, c'était une fortune assurée" (RN 338-39).

Women occupy an inferior position as chattels in *César Birotteau* as well. The employees see "Madame César" as wielding "la supériorité réelle" (B 222), but when César talks to Constance about his plans, it is to advise her concerning what he has already decided, rather than to consult her about what should be done. Constance adamantly expresses her opposition but at the same time recognizes her subordination to him, referring to him more than once as "le maître" (B 51, 102, 134) who is free to do as he wishes. Even the form of address *madame César* (or *madame Birotteau*) underlines Constance's position of inferiority. (It would seem nonsensical and insulting to refer to César as *monsieur Constance*.) According to Luce Irigaray, "l'ordre patriarcal est bien celui qui fonctionne comme *organisation et monopolisation de la propriété privée au bénéfice du chef de famille*. C'est son nom propre, le nom du père, qui détermine l'appropriation, y compris en ce qui concerne la femme et les enfants."[5]

Kind, generous César may contrast sharply in many ways with Eugénie Grandet's miserly father, but the two characters share the common view that they are the head of the family and in command. As Irigaray comments: "Dans la famille et la société patriarcales, l'homme est le propriétaire de la femme et des enfants."[6] César contradicts himself when he says he is going to allow his daughter to choose her own husband. She is not truly free to marry whomever she wants since he maintains his right to veto that choice. As well, while loving and respecting his wife, César expresses his belief in the superiority of men: "Suis-je bête d'écouter des idées de femme!" (B 105). He confirms that he is making the correct decision by seeking the counsel of another man, Constance's Uncle Pillerault. When César goes bankrupt, Pillerault takes over as the family's head to whom César, Constance and Césarine entrust their earnings and the management of their financial matters. It is as if César's entire being is defined in terms of money, and he reverts in despair to a type of childhood in which he is fed and cared for by Pillerault and no longer lives with his wife and child. Constance remains courageous, but she lacks Pillerault's contacts and ability to orchestrate César's triumphant and honourable rehabilitation in the patriarchal society described.[7]

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[5] Irigaray 79.

[6] Irigaray 140.

In the novels it is not just men who consider women inferior, but women see themselves this way also. Ève shows it in her comments meant to excuse David for not sharing his secrets with her: "les inventeurs doivent cacher le pénible enfantement de leur gloire à tout le monde, même à leurs femmes!. . . Une femme est toujours femme" (IP 605). She also tries to persuade Séchard to help his son and has no defence when met with Séchard's "argument invincible: 'les femmes n'entendent rien aux affaires.' " (IP 607).

In the case of Ève, we see an acceptance of the patriarchal system rather than a challenge to it, but some female characters go further still by actively endorsing that system and treating other women as commodities. For instance, la

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[7] The relationship of Pillerault as a "father" to the Birotteaus works well because both Constance and César are orphans and Pillerault's legitimate son and adopted son are dead. In this way, no interference arises from legitimate children or parents. The fact that Anselme Popinot is an orphan and that neither his uncle, the judge, nor his uncle and aunt, the Ragons, have any children also seems to facilitate their ties: if the Ragons and judge had children of their own, their interest in Anselme might be less keen; if Anselme's parents were living they might object to his marriage to Césarine, and it would be more difficult for the Birotteaus to consider him as a son rather than a son-in-law. The other orphan in this novel, where they are certainly plentiful, is du Tillet, but no bonds form between him and César who covers his theft of money from the Birotteaus. Rather than displaying gratitude for the gift, he wants to destroy César as will be seen shortly. The subject of "parent-child" relationships will be discussed further in the next chapter.

Soudry, in *Les paysans*, suggests that they seduce *le Tapissier* with a beautiful woman to cause problems between him and the countess. Another example concerns mothers, such as Coralie's in *Illusions perdues* or Atala's in *La cousine Bette*, who sell their daughters to men for monetary gain, an action which seems to contradict their role as mother and puts them in a degenerate, inhumane category apart from all others. Another form of complicity with the system is the rivalry that exists amongst women in the patriarchy at all levels of society and that concentrates on outward appearance as sole determinant of value rather than upon interior personal qualities. In the novels, the patriarchy, far from forging bonds amongst the women it oppresses, frequently sets them in hostile opposition to one another.

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The patriarchal forces to which female characters like Coralie, Ève and Mme de Rênal find themselves subjected were not new to the early nineteenth century. For instance, Thorstein Veblen links the origin of patriarchy to armed conflict:

> the earliest form of ownership is an ownership of the women . . . The ownership of women begins . . . with the seizure of female captives. The original reason for the seizure and appropriation of women seems to have been their usefulness as trophies. The practice of seizing women from the enemy as trophies, gave rise to a form of ownership-marriage, resulting in a household with a male head.[8]

Veblen's description of women as trophies (written at the end of the nineteenth century) would apply to many of the women in the novels of Balzac and Stendhal (written at the beginning of the nineteenth century). For example, in Balzac's *La cousine Bette,* the courtesans are in open competition with one another to show how much has been spent on them: "Voilà le prix que je vaux!" (CB 405). This is really a case of vicarious consumption and rivalry among men using gifts to prove their superiority through the amount spent on their possession. Boissaux, in Stendhal's *Féder ou le mari d'argent,* clearly categorizes Valentine as a trophy: "J'ai une jolie femme, et je veux m'en faire honneur; c'est une partie du luxe d'un homme tel que moi. . . . [Il] vient exposer à Paris sa femme et les produits de ses manufactures" (F 1301). She also appears as a tool to be used in achieving his goals when he suggests, first, that she be coquettish with certain dinner guests he is trying to impress and, secondly, that Valentine serve as the mouthpiece through which he can boast about expenditures, such as his English garden near Bordeaux. Although Boissaux is the undisputed authority in the marriage, he plans to use "le caprice de la femme aimable" (F 1316) as an excuse to avoid offending anyone who might put excessive monetary demands upon him.

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[8] Veblen 22-23.

Boissaux is the wealthy bourgeois willing to incur enormous expense through elegant dinner parties, but rather than carefree expenditure or gift, his meals are provided with the calculated goal of impressing others. Through conspicuous consumption of such items as food and books, he aims at social elevation. Valentine believes she must consider "son mari comme le maître absolu de toutes ses actions importantes" (F 1294) and basically acquiesces to whatever he wishes. That she assigns a higher priority to her husband's image in society than to her personal happiness is apparent in her resistance to any affection from Féder. Through marriage, she has been taken out of circulation, and although she loves Féder, her commitment to patriarchal rules seems stronger. When she believes Féder is dead her grief is extreme, but it appears compounded when she fears that it will reflect badly upon Boissaux: "que m'importe ce qu'on dira de moi? . . . c'est mon pauvre mari que je plains . . . Mon premier devoir est de sauver l'honneur de mon mari" (F 1343). Duty to the patriarch takes precedence over any sentiment for the beloved.

Féder's feelings for Valentine are somewhat ambivalent. Although he loves her and tells her so, he has trouble admitting it to himself. Under Rosalinde's guidance, he feigns eternal sorrow about his wife's death, but actually he feels nothing for her. Part of his apprehension in loving Valentine is that he will commit actions he will later regret but which he fears he will not be able to control. His behaviour towards Rosalinde is that of an opportunist: he does not love her but says he does because he sees her as a helpful stepping stone to form contacts with women in the upper levels of society. Féder's interference with the flow of gift between himself and Rosalinde is an early indication that Rosalinde's effort towards ensuring their union is futile. When he pays his agreed portion of the expenses, Féder keeps the relationship on a commercial footing despite Rosalinde's gifts which would otherwise form bonds between them. Money also serves as a barrier to prevent their marriage because Féder uses his lack of wealth as an excuse to delay marrying her. Féder is a character who pretends to love women (his wife and Rosalinde) while trying to camouflage even to himself the love he feels for another (Valentine). Typically when Valentine and Féder are talking about their love for one another, they deny its existence. For example, they must both repudiate any claims about their love that might be voiced by Valentine's brother or husband. On the one hand, Valentine is torn between a desire to give herself to Féder, and on the other, to abide by the patriarchal rules which prohibit her from becoming a gift because she is cast as a non-circulating object. Féder resists forcing the issue: he fears offending Valentine, and he lacks faith in his ability to establish an enduring giving relationship.

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Valentine is not free to be a gift (because she would be censured and ostracized) but examples exist of characters who are not restricted and become gifts. In these instances, the value of both the individual given and the recipient are enhanced. Such is the case when Véronique, who wishes to give Denise to Gérard, recognizes the worth of each. The direction of the gift (that is, Denise is given to Gérard, not vice versa) follows the patriarchal pattern, but the husband as a gift also surfaces when Gérard, vowing to remain single, earlier categorizes himself as a "triste présent" (CV 803) due to his career as a dedicated scientist. Gérard himself is originally a "cadeau" (CV 808) given from Grossetête to help Véronique; Grossetête thereby distinguishes Gérard as a man of talent. A further example of a person's merit being highlighted through becoming a gift is when Mgr Dutheil makes a "cadeau" (CV 834) of Ruffin and asks Véronique to ensure that the tutor's contribution be rewarded in order to keep the gift flowing according to the chain Dutheil -> Véronique -> Ruffin -> Véronique's son. If Véronique were to break the flow to Ruffin, she would risk interrupting the movement of gift to her son. Another example of a person given as a gift is found in *Le rouge et le noir* when Julien writes to Mathilde: "S'il vous faut absolument le secours d'un ami, je vous *lègue* l'abbé Pirard" (RN 647, my italics). Julien has the greatest admiration for Pirard as someone who is honest and trustworthy.

When a daughter is said to be given in the novels of the period, the above process (whereby a person's worth is accentuated when s/he serves as a gift) no longer applies. Gift becomes a façade for a commercial transaction between the prospective husband/purchaser and the father/seller. Luce Irigaray gives an accurate analysis of what transpires: "La femme a bien le plus généralement fonctionné comme l'enjeu d'une transaction, non sans rivalité, entre deux hommes, y compris dans son passage du père au mari. Comme une marchandise passant d'un propriétaire à l'autre, d'un consommateur à l'autre."[9] I now want to turn more specifically to the business of exchange involving women. Although, in these cases, a woman is directly concerned, she is never granted decision-making power equivalent to the men who decide her fate.

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[9] Irigaray 153.

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In the *Paysans*, purchasers active on the marriage market can be found at all levels of society from the nobility to the peasants. The parvenu Montcornet, "offrant son coeur, sa main, son hôtel, sa fortune au prix d'une alliance quelconque avec une grande famille" (P 151), marries Virginie de Troisville hoping to become a *pair de* France. Mme de Montcornet, who married Montcornet for his money but is in love with Blondet, says of the Michauds: "Quelle sublime et noble chose que l'amour dans le mariage!" (P 199). Initially, however, Justin Michaud is attracted to Olympe, not only by her beauty, but also by the prospect of her future fortune, seeing Olympe as a beautiful commodity of potential monetary value. In the same novel, "Godain, l'avare sans or" (P 227) wants to marry Catherine Tonsard, so he will be in a position to replace her father as tavern keeper. Not one of these three characters is attracted to his future wife on the sole basis of her characteristics as a person.

Philippe Bridau in *La rabouilleuse*, Charles Grandet in *Eugénie Grandet* and Lucien Chardon de Rubempré in *Splendeurs et misères des courtisanes* are similar to Montcornet in that they want to marry a woman from the nobility for whom they feel no love but who will raise their level in the social hierarchy; they are in pursuit of a type of symbolic capital in the form of social status. According to Richard Terdiman, the value of a noble family name decreased greatly after the Revolution, first due to the temporary abolition of the aristocracy and, secondly, because of the large number of fraudulent titles adopted after the Restoration.[10] Examples of such "elevations" in the novels include Julien Sorel (RN), whom the marquis de La Mole entitles M. de La Vernaye; Montcornet (P), who is made a count during the Empire in recognition of his military service; Philippe (R), who becomes comte de Brambourg; Lucien (SM), who is granted the use of his mother's noble name; and Charles (EG), who has not yet been inducted into the nobility but hopes marriage to Mathilde d'Aubrion will bring him a title. Perhaps the most ridiculous case is the foundling Ferdinand, in *César Birotteau*, who is without a surname: he carves a spot for himself in the aristocracy as *du* Tillet after the place where he was born. When César Birotteau introduces an architect to his wife as "*de* Grindot" (B 101) in an attempt to impress her, he illustrates the ease with which one can be promoted into the nobility. The Balzac family itself added *de* before its name for the first time on the baptismal certificate of the author's sister born in 1802.

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[10] Richard Terdiman, *Discourse, Counter-Discourse: The Theory and Practice of Symbolic Resistance in Nineteenth-Century France* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell UP, 1985) 47.

Regardless of whether they bear a noble name or not, Philippe, Charles and Lucien are bourgeois buyers with whom the aristocratic fathers are willing to exchange their daughters. The commodities exchanged bring greater social acceptance by the nobility for the buyers and an increase in the family's wealth for the sellers. The situation is more complicated, however, than a mere funneling of money into the family's coffers by a parvenu who wishes admittance into the inner circle. While such a marriage appeals to the father because of the tempting pecuniary gain to be made, the family's honour must not be tarnished in the process. Philippe and Lucien are denied their purchases because the fathers suspect them of dishonesty, and Charles narrowly misses exclusion only through Eugénie's generosity. "[L]e marquis d'Aubrion ne *donnera* pas sa fille au fils d'un banqueroutier" (EG 1191, my italics), but Eugénie pays the creditors and thus preserves the Grandet family honour which enables Charles to make his purchase.

Like Stendhal's Valentine, in *Féder*, women are very much objects on display in Balzac's novels in which physical beauty, rather than personality traits, is stressed as a determinant of value. Both Mathilde d'Aubrion and Clotilde de Grandlieu are described as ugly; the inference is that they would be discarded as undesirable if it were not for the social prestige attached to marriage with them. Clotilde is developed more than Mlle d'Aubrion as a character and emerges as a victim of the situation: she truly loves Lucien and vows to remain a spinster as a proof of her love should their marriage be forbidden by her parents. A sense of the reality of the subordination felt by an unmarried woman in the social setting of the early nineteenth-century novel is evident in the fact that she is twenty-seven years old and still not free to make her own choice of spouse. That Clotilde de Grandlieu and Amélie de Soulanges are not unique individuals (but objects which are interchangeable with others offered on the marriage market) is shown in the discussions following the irrevocable rupture of the marriage negotiations by the father. Lucien comments: "Si la maison de Grandlieu fait la difficile, il y a d'autres jeunes personnes très nobles à épouser" (SM 642), and as Rastignac consoles Lucien: "tu trouveras bien facilement une autre fille aussi noble et plus belle que Clotilde!" (SM 674), so too Maxime de Trailles soothes Philippe: "Tu peux trouver mieux" (R 538). When he is refused Amélie, Philippe does not experience sadness as one would expect if love were at all involved; he merely redirects his attention to another possibility on the marriage market: "Quelle fortune faudrait-il pour épouser une demoiselle de Grandlieu?" (R 538). This question lumps Grandlieu's daughters together in a homogeneous mass of indistinguishable and interchangeable commodities, rather than recognizing them as unique individuals.

The situation is similar with Pierquin, in *La recherche de l'absolu*, where the Claës family belongs to the old aristocracy: "Quelque pauvre qu'elle pût être, une demoiselle Claës apportait à son mari cette fortune de vanité que souhaitent tous les parvenus" (RA 797). Initially, Pierquin plans to marry Marguerite, the elder daughter, but he easily shifts to the younger daughter when he realizes

Marguerite and Emmanuel love one another. To Emmanuel, Marguerite is not interchangeable with her sister, but for Pierquin: "il lui fût indifférent d'épouser ou Félicie ou Marguerite, si l'une ou l'autre avaient le même nom et la même dot" (RA 811). Pierquin equates the women since the financial and symbolic capital to be obtained is the same regardless of which sister he marries. Both Emmanuel and Pierquin offer Marguerite financial assistance, but while their offers are ostensibly the same, in reality they differ radically. Emmanuel's offer is a gift made out of love and is a form of marriage proposal; she accepts by giving Emmanuel her ring as a symbolic pledge of herself, and he reciprocates with the gift of his mother's wedding band, something so precious to him that he always has it with him.

Marguerite reveals the perspicacity typical of her throughout the novel in her frank discussion with Félicie concerning Pierquin: "il est égoïste, intéressé, mais c'est un honnête homme; et sans doute ses défauts serviront à ton bonheur. Il t'aimera comme la plus jolie de ses propriétés, tu feras partie de ses affaires" (RA 810). While Marguerite knows Pierquin views her sister as a valuable acquisition, she expresses the hope that the love Félicie brings to the relationship will have a moderating effect on him. Pierquin's offer of financial aid is, in effect, a calculated effort to buy his way into the family. He realizes his previous error in offering a loan with reduced interest and returns feigning love for Félicie; he presents the money masked as a gift because he has coldly analyzed the situation and determined that this plan of action stands the best chance of obtaining Félicie as his wife. Pierquin tries to use gift to draw himself into the inner family circle: "Traitez-moi donc comme un frère! puisez dans ma bourse, prenez à même! . . . Je suis tout à vous, *sans intérêt*" (RA 811), but Marguerite does not accept his money because this would compromise her ability to act freely and in the best interests of her sister: to accept the money would place her under an obligation of return to Pierquin in the form of Félicie. She does, however, accept his help as the family's attorney; this is a business arrangement which is beneficial to them due to the energy he puts into assisting them. For Pierquin, it is an investment that will further his own interests: "Le dévouement s'était chiffré dans l'esprit du notaire comme une excellente spéculation, ses soins, ses peines furent alors en quelque sorte une mise de fonds qu'il ne voulut point épargner" (RA 812). Pierquin's efforts would have been much less intensive--and there would have been no offer of a "gift"--if he had not been driven by a desire for personal gain.

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In *César Birotteau*, the protagonist's daughter, Césarine, is also for sale on the marriage market. Initially, Alexander Crottat enjoys the position of preferred buyer because not only do his parents have money to bequeath him, but he is a notary which would mean a promotion in social level for Césarine. The Birotteaus, for whom "déifier" (B 104) their daughter is a pleasure, have raised her with this goal in mind. While her parents work hard, she rarely makes an appearance in the shop. The education in the fine arts that she has been given bestows a kind of surplus value upon her which her parents hope will elevate her in the bourgeoisie. Elements of Veblen's theory emerge as César delights in having a daughter who plays the piano and reads literary works. Césarine herself, evidently not immune to her father's value system, voluntarily enters the display and performs at the piano to prove to the architect hired to remodel their home "que la fille d'un parfumeur n'était pas étrangère aux beaux-arts" (B 102). The most superb instance of ostentation in the novel centres around the ball César gives and the redecoration of his home prior to it. Both are meant to impress despite César's protest that he plans to follow his wife's advice and live modestly even though he anticipates being wealthy. The ostentation becomes a source of embarrassment when the priest Loraux pays a visit; unlike the others, the priest is not given a tour to see the renovations. Although the gifts given to celebrate the occasion of France's liberation from foreign occupation and César's receipt of the cross function to show the love of one family member for another, they also serve to depict the bourgeois desire to display possessions. Ostentation is especially evident in the expensive books Césarine gives her father and in the dress Constance receives from her husband: César has no intention of reading the literary works but is overjoyed to possess them, as they add to the pomposity of his surroundings, and the dress converts the shopkeeper's wife into an object of beauty now worthy of presiding over the festivities.

When Anselme Popinot expresses his interest in marrying Césarine, his boss does not flatly refuse his daughter, but he frankly does not believe the young man will succeed with his marriage plans. César does not think any young girl would find Anselme attractive because of his red hair and limp. Anselme is also a poor orphan which does not make him an enticing addition to a family from a monetary perspective. In addition, Constance has a strong desire to marry her daughter to a notary (Crottat) whereas Anselme appears destined to remain at their societal level. To Crottat, Césarine is merely an acquisition; this becomes clear when he switches his attention to Lourdois's daughter after Roquin's warning that César is to lose his fortune and thus Césarine's dowry is about to disappear. To Anselme, however, she is also the woman he loves regardless of her wealth and the woman for whom he commits himself to do whatever possible in order to obtain her as his wife. Césarine is thus a unique being to Anselme whereas to Crottat she remains one of a homogeneous mass of marriageable women from which to draw and for whom Lourdois's daughter becomes a desirable substitute.

Although Anselme's efforts help to achieve his goal of obtaining Césarine as his wife, it is questionable whether these would have been adequate in the absence of gift, which is interwoven throughout the novel. For example, it is Constance's reference to the money stolen by du Tillet which makes him hastily acquiesce to Anselme's demands for a substantial payment (to compensate for relocation), the money going towards César's debt. Gift plays a role because it is César's generous gift of the amount stolen and his charade to cover the theft that prevents the ruin of du Tillet's reputation. Rather than being grateful, du Tillet does everything in his power to destroy the virtuous bourgeois who knows of his past crime. He finds his tool to crush César in Roquin who has been embezzling funds from his clients to provide gifts for Sarah Gobseck, *la belle Hollandaise*, whom he received as a "présent" (B 86) from another client. (Sarah in turn has been passing much of what she is given to Maxime de Trailles who also drains Anastasie of all her sources of money in *Le père Goriot*.) Roquin is able to steal with ease from César, Pillerault and the Ragons: these virtuous bourgeois have trust in him, not only as a friend, but due to his respected position as a notary.

Society seems more sympathetic towards the thief than the victim: "Roquin . . . était *l'infortuné Roguin*, le parfumeur était *ce pauvre Birotteau*. L'un semblait excusé par une grande passion, l'autre semblait plus coupable à cause de ses prétentions" (B 264). Molineux, César's landlord, appears insensitive to his tenant's position: "je n'ai pas la moindre politesse en fait d'argent . . . L'argent ne connaît personne; il n'a pas d'oreilles, l'argent; il n'a pas de coeur, l'argent" (B 244). Gradually, however, through his consistent demonstration of honesty and a determined effort to repay his creditors, César recaptures the admiration and esteem of society, including such characters as the king and the stingy Molineux. Du Tillet aimed to destroy César's credibility forever but fails to eliminate the flow of gift in his former employer's direction; indirectly through Anselme, du Tillet returns the gift with a substantial increase. When he takes credit for César's re-establishment, Pillerault scorns him.

A second example of the gift assisting Anselme involves his Uncle Popinot (a judge) and Gaudissart. Due to the judge's efforts, Gaudissart escapes execution for his political activities. Previously, "Gaudissart . . . nourrissait un profond désespoir de ne pouvoir porter à son sauveur qu'une stérile reconnaissance" (B 137), and Anselme brings joy to his life by providing him with the vehicle by which to give in turn to Popinot. Gaudissart's gratitude is great, and he proves to be invaluable to Anselme in his assiduous attempt to repay Popinot's gift through giving to his orphaned nephew.

A third example of gift circulating to Anselme's advantage appears when César gives the young man the opportunity to open his own business, not only because he recognizes his merit, but also as a way to repay the Ragons who previously gave César his start. The Ragons are strongly attached to their orphaned nephew to whom they have given during his youth, and Anselme shows his ties and generosity towards them in returning the gift in the form of financial assistance when they are in need. The source of his money, of course, is employment with César--employment he may not have had if the Ragons had not initially given to César.

Anselme provides funds to repay César's debts in order to procure Césarine, but elements of gift exchange are evident: Anselme also gives to César to repay him for his previous help. As well, the money which the young man furnishes is given with love, which removes it from the commercial domain. It is more akin to a generous gift which is met with the return gift of the daughter. In the novel, exchange is typically described in terms of pecuniary relations, but it can also be viewed in terms of the circulating gifts shown below:

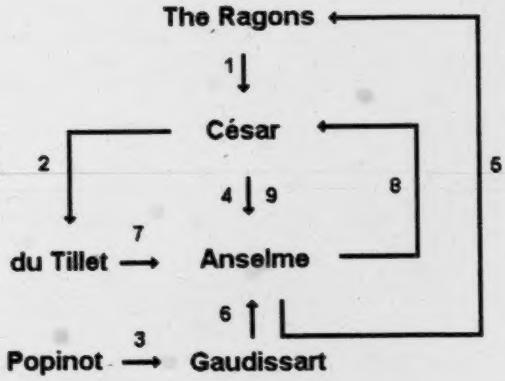

Figure 1: Gift circulation in *César Birotteau*

From the beginning (even before César's financial difficulties), Anselme strives to make a fortune in order to become eligible to marry Césarine. The young woman finds his physical infirmity insignificant and loves him, but she (like Anselme) knows that parental consent for their union will be withheld because he is poor. Constance favours a union between Crottat and her daughter, but Césarine finds Crottat revolting and continues to love Anselme. César's financial misfortunes provide an opportunity for the lovers since the notary is uninterested in an acquisition which will not enhance his monetary wealth. Constance is truly disappointed at the loss of Crottat and tries to make the best of the situation; she now attempts to secure Anselme as a husband for her daughter. Césarine becomes a commodity which is presented in beautiful packaging with the express goal of attracting a buyer: "Constance, qui avait renoncé, non sans douleur, au notaire, lequel jouait dans sa pensée le rôle d'un prince héréditaire, contribua, non sans d'amères réflexions, à cette toilette. . . . la mère et la fille avaient compris la nécessité d'ensorceler le petit Popinot" (B 227). Césarine's active and ready cooperation shows her willingness to participate in the process.

How Anselme is viewed by César and Constance undergoes a significant evolution. His generosity includes providing Constance with a respectable job and place to live which changes her perception of him from a last resort spouse for her daughter to someone she could never view as a son-in-law, but only as a son. César initially dismisses Anselme's desire for Césarine as wishful thinking, but gradually comes to see it as more realistic. He recognizes Anselme's acute business sense and comments: "Né commerçant! Il aura ma fille" (B 140). Later, when Anselme's business is prospering and César is bankrupt, the old perfumer undergoes a reversal. Previously, Anselme did not have the wealth to be a suitable buyer for Césarine; now he has the wealth but is flatly refused: "Mon enfant, tu n'épouseras jamais la fille d'un failli" (B 261). This change in attitude makes sense only if marriage is regarded as a commercial transaction. César's honesty does not allow him to take unfair advantage of Anselme, who could make a much more profitable deal by choosing another bride.

That marriage can be a purely market exchange during this period is demonstrated by the conversation between Crottat and César. Crottat bluntly tells César that he stopped pursuing Césarine after Roquin advised him that her dowry was about to disappear. The two men might just as well be discussing how shares in a company have lost their value or how a product is now worthless. No offence is meant by Crottat and none is taken by César. His daughter is still the same person, but Crottat's reason for rejecting her (she no longer comes with an attractive dowry) seems perfectly acceptable to César and well within the rules established by their society.

One of César's chief goals in investing in the deal by which he is defrauded of his wealth is to provide a more attractive dowry for his daughter, which shows that he assigns a high priority to arranging the best possible marriage for her; nevertheless, for him the exchange must be fair, and the way to establish its fairness (from his viewpoint) is through money. When Anselme asks to be promised Césarine once César is no longer in debt, the latter complies, but it is not in any way a ruse to extract money from the young man: he gives his word because he believes that the task Anselme has set himself is insurmountable. In fact, when Anselme achieves his goal, César resists fulfilling his commitment. Whereas César initially sees nothing wrong with arranging the most profitable marriage for Césarine, the transaction here (although tempting to him) must be rejected because of the monetary imbalance; it is, however, welcomed by Césarine: "c'est vendre ma fille!--Et je veux être achetée, cria Césarine" (B 303).

César remains entangled in the economic, and although his daughter uses words from the same mercantile vocabulary, she does not truly allow herself to be bought. Instead, Césarine exerts pressure on her father to give her as a gift to the man she loves. For Césarine and Anselme, the money for César's creditors is a gift made out of love within the family, not a payment for a product from the outside. Pillerault has the same view and tries to convince César to accept Anselme's gift. César proudly accepts a gift of money from the king to pay his debts and yet hesitates to accept money from Anselme who wants to formally recognize his love for Césarine. Anselme earlier expresses the idea of family bonds facilitating the movement of gift: "Je suis donc enfin de la famille, j'ai le droit de m'occuper de ses affaires" (B 261). Circulation of gift within the confines of the inner family circle and between strangers is discussed further in the next chapter; for the moment, I shall continue to explore the circulation of women.

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Another beloved daughter who becomes a commodity on the marriage market is Véronique, in *Le curé de village*. Before her birth, her father's total existence revolves around the accumulation of money, but his sentiments for his daughter produce a noticeable, sudden change: old miser Sauviat is rendered human as demonstrated by his gift-giving. There is a sharp contrast between the abundant gifts Véronique receives from her parents and the avarice they display towards others. The exception is their gifts to the poor: "Sauviat ou sa femme allaient aussitôt chercher sans façons ni grimaces ce qu'ils croyaient être leur quote-part dans les aumônes de la paroisse" (CV 647); these gifts show their dutiful obedience to religion rather than their love as in the case of Véronique. When Sauviat furnishes her two rooms with secondhand furniture and plants flowers given to him, the narrator comments: "Si Véronique avait pu faire des comparaisons, et connaître le caractère, les moeurs, l'ignorance de ses parents, elle aurait su combien il y avait d'affection dans ces petites choses" (CV 649). Sauviat's strong paternal love thus finds expression through his gifts.

In seeking a rich bourgeois named Graslin as Véronique's husband, Sauviat sincerely believes he is securing the happiness of his daughter: for him "la fortune semblait constituer tout le bonheur" (CV 656). Although Sauviat has the best of intentions, he does not succeed in buying joy for his child because Véronique is not attracted by material possessions. Her father is a miser whereas she has the spirit of the giver (which will be demonstrated in the next chapter). While she dreams of someone like Paul in *Paul et Virginie*, her father presents her with Graslin, a scrawny, pimpled man whose repulsive exterior reflects his interior being, as is often the case with Balzac's characters.[11] Unlike Anselme Popinot, Graslin desires only to accumulate wealth and does not see his prospective wife as a loving person with whom to share and enjoy life's experiences: rather, she is an asset to be acquired. The gifts made during the courtship function as a downpayment to buy a commodity (Véronique): "chaque fois il apporta quelque riche présent: des anneaux, une montre, une chaîne d'or, un nécessaire, etc. Ces prodigalités incroyables, un mot les justifiera. La dot de Véronique se composait de presque toute la fortune de son père" (CV 662). Véronique also enters into the purchase cycle: "Elle admira ces délicieux bijoux, ces perles, ces diamants, ces bracelets, ces rubis qui plaisent à toutes les filles d'Ève; elle se trouvait moins laide ainsi parée" (CV 663); however, she soon deviates from the narrator's typology of "toutes les filles d'Eve" that suggests predictable behaviour. To allow herself to be bought is not in keeping with her personality as developed in the novel. It seems that she is pushed into the marriage by the cumulative efforts of church, family and society.

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[11] According to Chevalier, the belief was widely held in early nineteenth-century France that morality could be assessed from physical characteristics. This idea will be discussed further in the next chapter. Louis Chevalier, *Labouring Classes and Dangerous Classes in Paris during the First Half of the Nineteenth Century*, trans. Frank Jellinek (1958; London: Routledge, 1973).

Véronique takes pleasure in the bouquet of rare flowers that Graslin gives her upon each visit. Despite the rarity of the flowers, these bouquets parallel Crochot's daily bouquet to Eugénie: the flowers are meant to win the affection of a wealthy man's daughter. They differ, however, in the reaction evoked in the recipient: Eugénie has given her heart to Charles while Véronique is inexperienced in love at this point in the novel. For Eugénie, the flowers are seen as a feeble attempt to buy her love, whereas Véronique is naïve: "elle fut comme plongée dans le monde idéal et fantastique de la nature tropicale" (CV 662). Graslin's gifts succeed in winning over Véronique who is innocent and partially detached from reality. In this instance, Véronique is a precursor of Flaubert's Emma Bovary who creates her own vision of love based on fictional characters.

For society (unaware of Sauviat's wealth), Graslin's gifts signify that he is "pris d'amour" (CV 664). Like Véronique, society is blind to the fact that, "[f]asciné par le million du beau-père, le parvenu se montra généreux par calcul" (CV 667). After having secured his asset, Graslin stops giving and liquidates the majority of his previous gifts. Véronique shows no opposition to Graslin's withdrawal of gifts which serves as a resistance to the vilified nature of the gift which has been misused by Graslin to satisfy his desire for material possessions. Véronique is very different from Goriot's daughter Delphine, who is quite aware of the amount of her dowry and resents her husband's stinginess.

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Goriot, in *Le père Goriot*, is another father who believes (like Sauviat) that happiness can be procured given sufficient wealth. Goriot sees the role of the father as a giver ("Les pères doivent toujours donner pour être heureux. Donner toujours, c'est ce qui fait qu'on est père"[PG 228]), and the fortune that he has spent his life amassing is divided between his two daughters in an effort to put them in an advantageous position on the marriage market. While his money is presented in the guise of gift, Goriot is actually executing a commercial transaction where he is buying husbands for his daughters. Like Véronique, his daughters enter loveless relationships; Anastasie exchanges her beauty and dowry for a title, and Delphine exchanges hers for increased wealth. Delphine later blames Goriot for the exchange, which results in an unhappy marriage, but she must share the responsibility: she originally insists on the union and Goriot, the giving father, as always, acquiesces to his daughter's demands. The words of the duchesse de Langeais depict the magnitude of Goriot's giving and the ingratitude of his daughters: "Ce père avait tout donné. Il avait donné, pendant vingt ans, ses entrailles, son amour; il avait donné sa fortune en un jour. Le citron bien pressé, ses filles ont laissé le zeste au coin des rues" (PG 115). Goriot loves his daughters dearly, but it is a very uni-directional gift-giving relationship with nothing flowing back to him.

From one perspective, Goriot attempts to buy the love of his daughters but fails. In the patriarchal system of the first half of the nineteenth century represented in the novel, women are in a subordinate position. Although his daughters are adults, Goriot considers them to be children, and they also act like children who expect his financial support. The process of female subordination continues in marriage. Delphine bemoans "[l]es chaînes d'or" (PG 169) that make her dependent. (Nucingen pays her expenses but does not give her any money.) The contaminating influence of the patriarchy is evident when Goriot gives from duty rather than entirely from love. To a large extent he demands the love and respect owed to a patriarch. When it appears that his role as giver is being usurped he is jealous, and when it vanishes due to his lack of funds, his whole identity begins to crumble: "je ne suis plus père! non. Elle me demande, elle a besoin! et moi, misérable, je n'ai rien" (PG 251). When Goriot lies dying, he reiterates the belief he had expressed earlier ("L'argent, c'est la vie. Monnaie fait tout." [PG 242]) in the power of money: "si j'avais gardé ma fortune, si je ne la leur avais pas donnée, elles seraient là . . . L'argent donne tout, même des filles" (PG 273). Goriot believes that love is for sale just like any other commodity, but is it? Karl Marx argues that love can only be exchanged for love.[12] When money enters into an exchange, a process of reification occurs whereby all relationships are mediated by objects. Money becomes the measure of everything, and direct human bonds are eliminated. Goriot, the patriarchal head of the family, is in charge of the distribution of its wealth, and he executes this responsibility through his gifts to his daughters; however, a distortion of the gift occurs. While generosity is evident, it is a capitalistic investment because he expects a return on his expenditure--his daughter's affection.

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[12] Karl Marx, *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*, trans. Martin Milligan (NY: International Publishers, 1964) 169.

Under the tutelage of a father or husband, female characters like Delphine (Goriot) Nucingen (PG), Clotilde Grandlieu (SM) and Valentine Boissaux (F) appear as commodities whose movement in the patriarchy is restricted. Luce Irigaray claims the patriarchy relegates women to three categories--mother, virgin and prostitute;[13] and these categories apply to the situations described in the novels of Balzac and Stendhal. With regards to the category of mother, once a woman passes from the father to the husband the rules of the patriarchy dictate that she has been removed from circulation. The anguish that female characters like Mme de Rênal and Valentine feel (when they are attracted to an outside male rather than their husband) indicates the extent to which they have been indoctrinated to accept the patriarchal view of the uncirculating wife as defining virtue and worth.

The second category--that of virgin--is a prerequisite for a woman to be exchanged on the marriage market. The inequity between the sexes becomes apparent when the prospective husband's lack of virginity has no bearing in the negotiations, so the virgin daughter typically passes to a man who has had at least one mistress. Premarital or extramarital male sexual activity in the patriarchy adds to a man's image of prowess (or at the very least is excused) while premarital sex deflowers a woman disqualifing her from the marriage market, and extramarital sex causes women to lose virtue and status in society. Mathilde, in *Le rouge et le noir*, is the exception: her father's money and position in the nobility will probably secure her a husband despite her premarital sex; but, typically, young women without this sort of backing are destined to prostitution. Before discussing women, such as Mariette (R), Valérie (CB) and Josépha (CB), who are forced into prostitution by the patriarchal society in the novels in which they appear, I would like to examine an uncirculating wife (Adeline [CB]) and a virgin (Lydie [SM]).

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[13] Irigaray 180-81.

Women, in the patriarchy of the novels, are portrayed as possessions to which husbands demand a clear title. Adeline, in *La cousine Bette*, is a model of conforming virtue; she refuses to circulate after marriage to Hector. The double standard in the patriarchy is demonstrated by the extramarital relations of Hector and Steinbock, who expect sexual fidelity from their wives. Steinbock says he would kill Hortense if she became Stidmann's mistress--a threat which Hortense takes as proof of his love.

Adeline resists Napoleon's advances, and some twenty years later, she refuses Crevel's offer of money for her daughter Hortense's dowry in exchange for herself. (Hortense solves the problem by seeking her own husband, a great artist who, she believes, will bring fame and fortune. The artist [Steinbock] is so fascinated by Hortense's beauty that he is prepared to accept her without a dowry.) The main reason Crevel wants Adeline as his mistress is to soothe his male ego: he craves vengeance against Hector who stole a courtesan (Josépha) from him. As he explains: "vous êtes ma vengeance! . . . Votre fille! c'est, pour moi, le moyen de vous obtenir. . . . Hulot m'a donné le droit . . . de poser le marché" (CB 67-68). Adeline knows her role as the virtuous, suffering wife and is indignant that Crevel should attempt to corrupt her: "Trente-deux ans d'honneur, de loyauté de femme ne périront pas sous les coups de monsieur Crevel... . . . je rendrai mon âme à Dieu sans souillure..." (CB 69). When Hector deserts her for Valérie, Adeline does not have enough money for food but continues her martyrdom to the established laws of the patriarchy: "Il me veut ainsi: que sa volonté soit faite! . . . je n'ai pas commis la moindre faute, mes deux enfants sont établis, je puis attendre la mort, enveloppée dans les voiles immaculés de ma pureté d'épouse" (CB 202-03). Later when all other sources of funds are exhausted, she is prepared to sacrifice her virtue for Crevel's money with which she hopes to save her Uncle Johann Fischer[14] and the family honour. At this point, her value to Crevel has been erased. Crevel believes that he has affected a more complete vengeance by taking Valérie from Hector than he could have accomplished with Adeline. When Crevel suggests that a certain wealthy bourgeois might be interested in acquiring her as a mistress, Adeline swiftly and firmly withdraws to her non-circulating position. She sees her whole worth in terms of the patriarchal definition of the virtuous wife and is devastated by Valérie's words relayed through Lisbeth. Adeline is made aware that her proposition (made in secret to Crevel) has been divulged to Valérie, a demon capable of exposing it to ruin Adeline's honourable reputation.

Valérie is attracted by "la puissance de la femme" (CB 259) as depicted by Dalila, a domineering woman who would seize control, whereas Adeline sees it as her duty to subordinate herself to Hector. Adeline's subordination is a further development of characters, such as Joséphine Claës, in *La recherche de l'absolu*, and Mme Grandet, in *Eugénie Grandet*. These three women give obedience to their husbands even though they do not approve of their passions--Hector for women, Claës for science, Grandet for money--and the deaths of all three are precipitated by the insensitivity of their husbands. The whole existence of the women revolves around their duty as wives and mothers as established by the patriarchy. They make great sacrifices during their lives and finish by giving up life itself. Adeline expresses this in her dying words to Hector: "je n'avais plus que ma vie à te donner: dans un moment tu seras libre, et tu pourras faire une baronne Hulot" (CB 451). She has given everything her best effort but has been unsuccessful in changing her husband.

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[14] As shown in his letter to Hulot, Fischer is an honourable man who feels strongly about Adeline: "je mourrai volontiers pour celui à qui nous devons le bonheur de notre Adeline" (CB 327). Fischer gives the gift of his life to repay Hulot for what he mistakenly believes the latter has given his beloved niece.

At one point, Adeline equates herself with an object at Hector's disposal: "Je suis ta chose, fais de moi tout ce que tu voudras" (CB 355). It is not just the wife, however, who is expected to show dutiful respect for the family's patriarchal head; the children are conditioned to recognize his rights also. For years, Adeline successfully hides Hector's adulterous behaviour from their children, and when they find out, they tend to blame Valérie more than him. Victorin, an adult child with a family of his own, later excludes his father from the household to which he has brought shame: "j'offre à *ma mère* . . ." (CB 354), but "[l]es droits du père sont toujours si sacrés, même lorsqu'il est infâme et dépouillé d'honneur, que Victorin s'arrêta" (CB 354), and it is Célestine who completes the sentence. Hector recognizes that he is "indigne de la vie de famille . . . un père qui devient l'assassin, le fléau de la famille au lieu d'en être le protecteur et la gloire" (CB 355) and leaves, intending to return once the family's fortune is restored. Another example of the respect to be shown the father comes when Victorin tries to convince Crevel that Valérie is not worthy of being his wife. Victorin explains why Célestine does not voice her opposition: "Votre fille Célestine a trop le sentiment de ses devoirs pour vous dire un seul mot de blâme" (CB 394). It is also "les devoirs de la fille" (CB 429) that Célestine uses as her initial reason for insisting that she visit her dying father.

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While Adeline Hulot is an idealized uncirculating wife, Lydie Peyrade, in *Splendeurs et misères des courtisanes*, depicts the category of the woman in the patriarchy whose circulation on the marriage market is dependent upon her virginity. All of her father's energies are directed at increasing her dowry in order to attract a wealthy husband. Peyrade ironically takes a job to obtain funds for his daughter's dowry that results in the loss of her virginity, which in turn eliminates her marriage prospects. Lydie is abducted in an attempt to coerce Peyrade to rectify the damage that he and his cohorts have done to Lucien's reputation, and her virginity is destroyed as a means of vengeance when Peyrade is not seen to comply. At an earlier point, Peyrade considers similar action against Nucingen's daughter. (He suspects that the banker is responsible for eliminating the annual government payments he was counting on for Lydie.) Peyrade rejects the idea because he doubts that Nucingen, for whom money is all important, loves his daughter. On the other hand, violating Lydie is an easy and efficient way to hurt her caring father. His anguish over Lydie's deflowering is extreme; he knows she has been mistreated because of him.

Lydie is a victim of the patriarchal system. Although she resists being raped, the loss of her virginity means that she is excluded from the marriage market--an indication of woman's extremely precarious position. Asie predicts that Lydie will turn to prostitution, but Balzac assigns her an even more tragic fate. Lydie has been indoctrinated by the morality of the patriarchy and is so traumatized by her abuse under it that she cannot dissociate herself from the guilt of the crime perpetrated against her and suffers a complete mental collapse.

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Virginity is a prerequisite for a female character's entry into the marriage market, and beauty increases the probability that she will be procured. Physical attractiveness (as measured by the patriarchy) dictates the value assigned women in the novels. According to Naomi Wolf, author of the *Beauty Myth*, women's fixation with beauty is a mechanism for men to maintain power. At the end of the twentieth century, women still feel coerced to conform to standards of beauty and see themselves in competition with one another. Dowries and the desire to acquire a title or higher position in society through marriage may have largely disappeared since the early nineteenth century, but beauty remains a marketable commodity. In the novels I have selected, Valérie Marneffe, in *La cousine Bette*, provides one of the best examples of a woman who defines her whole worth in terms of her beauty: she chooses death rather than a possible cure which would leave her ugly. A second example, Esther Gobseck, in *Splendeurs et misères des courtisanes*, selects a method of suicide which will leave her beauty intact. Another example, Adeline, is initially incorporated into the nobility because Hector Hulot, baron d'Ervy, is attracted by her beauty, and she measures her attractiveness by the extent of her wrinkles. Adeline has made an accurate assessment of patriarchal values: Crevel chooses Valérie, who is deemed more beautiful and a commodity of greater worth because of her younger age. In the first half of the nineteenth century, a female character without a dowry or social status is left with only her beauty to market which leaves her in a very vulnerable position, given the ephemeral nature of beauty as defined by the patriarchy.

That beauty is a social construct is demonstrated by both Thorstein Veblen and Jean Baudrillard. Veblen reveals the variations in how beauty is measured in different cultures; for instance, someone looking for a wife capable of contributing physical labour would prefer a strong female while someone interested in displaying his wealth would choose a fragile creature. In a society in which women are needed to perform physical work, "the ideal of female beauty is a robust, large-limbed woman . . . while the conformation of the face is of secondary weight."[15] This contrasts with the definition of a beautiful woman in early nineteenth-century France as one who is slender and fragile with fine facial features, a beauty determined by a woman's ability to reflect a man's wealth. Veblen's comments near the end of the century apply here: "She is useless and expensive, and she is consequently valuable as evidence of pecuniary strength."[16] Baudrillard cites fashion as an example of beauty's impermanence: "Un vêtement vraiment beau, définitivement beau mettrait fin à la mode. Celle-ci ne peut donc que le nier, le refouler, l'effacer--*tout en conservant dans chacune de ses démarches l'alibi de la beauté*."[17] The same argument applies to women in a patriarchy. Just as a piece of clothing is seen to go out of style and "lose" its beauty with time, a woman's beauty fades, thereby reducing her value. According to Naomi Wolf, wrinkles on a woman's face signal a decline, whereas on a man's they indicate character, that is, an enhancement.[18]

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[15] Veblen 146.
[16] Veblen 149.

I have selected Mariette, Valérie and Josépha for a closer study of women in the novels who sell their beauty as their only means of achieving their goals. Gorgeous Mariette, in *La rabouilleuse*, embodies both the extreme taker and giver. On the one hand, she is the selfish courtesan who uses her beauty to extract large sums from men, one of whom is Philippe Bridau. He loves her so deeply that he proposes marriage and steals to provide her money; but she sees him only as "un premier échelon" (R 317), depletes his funds and then abandons him for a wealthy duke. To Mariette, men are merely tools to be exploited as a means to further her career as a dancer. Her ultimate aim, however, is to enhance the position of her brother, a clerk trying to become an attorney so that he can help her. The gift can be seen to be circulating freely between these two orphans who love one another, but they exclude others from their inner gift-giving circle: "En dehors de leurs sentiments l'un pour l'autre . . . tout, pour eux, était . . . barbare, étranger, ennemi" (R 310).

If Mariette had reciprocated in the love relationship which Philippe believed he had established through gifts, his egoistic nature might have been moderated. To Mariette, Philippe's money, rather than being a gift, is payment for her beauty and temporary companionship, which she markets to the highest bidder; hence

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[17] Jean Baudrillard, *Pour une critique de l'économie politique du signe* (Paris: Gallimard, 1972) 82.
[18] Naomi Wolf, *The Beauty Myth* (Toronto: Random House, 1990) 71.

Philippe's replacement by the duke. That woman (in the form of Mariette) is seen as an object circulating among men is evident when the duke protects Philippe. He owes it to him because he had taken Mariette; it is an overdue payment on an object which had changed hands in the past.

* * *

Valérie is another character who resolves to sell her beauty to escape poverty: "La puissante étreinte de la Misère . . . avait décidé cette jeune femme à prendre sa beauté pour moyen de fortune" (CB 151). The narrator describes Valérie as "une femme [qui] a résolu de faire métier et marchandise de sa beauté" (CB 186). While Adeline Hulot plays by the established rules of the patriarchy, Valérie Marneffe manipulates them to work in her favour. At the beginning of her relationship with Hector, she displays the façade of the virtuous, devoted wife: "Madame Marneffe . . . faisait d'étranges façons pour accepter la moindre chose de lui. . . . ne commencez pas par déshonorer la femme que vous dites aimer . . . À chaque présent, c'était un fort à emporter, une conscience à violer" (CB 143). It is all part of a crafty plan to get gifts flowing to her simultaneously from more than one source. The virtuous and desperate Adeline asks Crevel for money, but "le Vice ne demande rien, comme on l'a vu par madame Marneffe, *il se fait tout offrir*. Ces sortes de femmes ne deviennent exigeantes qu'au moment où elles se sont rendues indispensables, ou quand il s'agit d'*exploiter* un homme" (CB 324, my italics).[19] When Valérie does ask for a gift, the request comes from Mme Marneffe, the dedicated wife, not from Valérie, the lover. Hector provides the job promotion and the *Légion d'Honneur* cross for her husband that she wants, and he gives her a beautifully decorated apartment as well as a generous living allowance;

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[19] According to Anthony Heath, "the man who volunteers a favour does not have the same right to a return as the man who was asked." Valérie would, therefore, not be under the same obligation as someone (such as Adeline) who requests help. Anthony Heath, *Rational Choice and Social Exchange: A Critique of Exchange Theory* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1976) 150.

but it is not enough. The even greater social status that Valérie seeks for Marneffe does not materialize until Hector falls into the trap set by Valérie and her husband. (He is caught in bed with Valérie and complies with Marneffe's demands for advancement to avoid prosecution.)

The narrator exposes women such as Valérie as "Machiavels en jupon . . . [avec] les semblants de vertu, . . . les façons hypocrites" (CB 188) who are dangerous because true courtesans are open about their intentions, and thus men are forewarned. For example, Crevel, in whom she sees "une caisse éternelle" (CB 192), is blinded by "[l]es tromperies de l'amour vénal" (CB 192) and believes Valérie is virtue incarnate. Valérie's deceit contrasts sharply with Josépha's frankness in dealing with her rich duke: "Vous m'êtes agréable, utile, mais vous ne m'êtes pas indispensable" (CB 408). Valérie is adept at convincing each of her four suitors--Hector, Crevel, Montès and Steinbock--that he is the only one she truly loves and with whom she has sexual relations. (Her husband is excluded as a sexual partner due to venereal disease and favours her extra-marital affairs because of the economic benefits. Marneffe is more like a pimp than a husband, and Valérie, hiding behind the protective barrier of marriage, is more like a prostitute than a wife.) When Valérie becomes pregnant each lover is sure that he is the father, and she uses this belief to maximize the movement of gift in her direction. Lisbeth, aware of what Valérie is capable of, even asks her if she is truly pregnant or if it is just a clever ruse to use as leverage.

Hector will provide an income for *his* child plus one for Marneffe's son. With regards to Steinbock, it provides Valérie with the means she has been seeking to cause a rupture between him and Hortense (his wife). Typically in a patriarchy, it is the male who controls the wealth and thus has one or more females under his sole domination, but Valérie stages a reversal of gender roles, gaining exclusive power over several males. For example, both Hector and Steinbock are separated from their wives because of her. When Mme Nourrisson[20] reveals Valérie's infidelity to Montès, Valérie does not ask the Brazilian to forgive her. Instead, she attacks his claim to faithfulness and thereby takes control of the situation. Valérie expresses love for Montès and Steinbock, but in neither case is there an enduring passion. With Steinbock a male-female reversal occurs; Valérie seeks to possess and conquer him by giving him money. Finally, in a quarrel about what she has given him, his male pride is wounded, and a rupture occurs between them.

Ironically, Valérie continues to have relations with Montès out of fear of what he might do to her if she stops, and yet continuing the relationship allows Montès to give Valérie the disease which he knows will be fatal to both her and his rival, the wealthy Crevel. Montès says that killing her is proof of his love, but in his comments, such as "je ne la laisserai vivante à personne, si elle n'est pas toute à moi!" (CB 417), a reification of Valérie takes place: she must be totally his possession or be destroyed. Cydalise willingly participates in Montès's plot and contracts the disease in exchange for money; another woman thus sells herself on the market. Montès is an anxious buyer, not out of love, but as someone in need of a tool by which to take vengeance. The anti-gift flows from the afflicted Black to Cydalise, then on to Montès, who gives it to Valérie, who unknowingly passes it to Crevel. Victorin (Crevel's son-in-law) is a participant in the process; he agrees to a large payment to Mme Nourrisson if she disposes of Valérie for him. While he would stop short of murdering anyone himself and would favour another route, he is not above authorizing the executioner to proceed in order to defend Adeline: "j'écraserais cette femme comme on écrase une vipère!... Ah! elle attaque la vie et l'honneur de ma mère!" (CB 401). Gift enters the scenario as a cover for payment of the assassination: Victorin is to give a specified amount to a poor priest who asks for alms for a desert convent. As well, when Crevel bequeaths his fortune to Célestine, his gift serves to pay his assassins because Victorin takes money found in Crevel's desk (which is part of the inheritance) to settle the debt.

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[20] This is a pseudonym for Vautrin's aunt, Jacquelin Collin, who also appears as madame de Saint-Estève and Asie. These name changes, like those of her nephew, help hide her identity in much the same way as Valérie adopts a new persona in marrying Crevel: "elle venait de faire peau neuve en changeant son nom pour le glorieux nom d'un maire de Paris" (CB 458). Marriage to Crevel brings the gift of elevated social status in addition to financial resources.

Earlier when Crevel broaches the subject of Montès, whom he suspects of being Valérie's lover, the young woman seizes the opportunity to increase her own selling price. By this time, the old merchant desperately wants her, not only because of all he has paid towards his investment (that is, possessing Valérie), but also because of love. It is as if the financial transaction which had started out in the form of gift had resulted in the buyer/giver becoming bonded to the recipient, but the latter remains unaffected. Valérie openly admits that Montès is not her cousin and launches an attack on Crevel, situating his sentiments clearly in the realm of the commercial: "Un boutiquier qui achète une femme pour se venger d'un homme est au-dessous, dans mon estime, de celui qui l'achète par amour. . . . vous m'avez acquise comme on achète un pistolet pour tuer son adversaire" (CB 226). When Crevel protests: "Vous n'avez pas exécuté le marché" (CB 226), he provides further evidence, since the word *marché* serves to confirm Valérie's accusation that love is not involved. The scene that follows resembles that of two negotiators struggling to work out an agreement. Crevel tries to minimize what he gives up and looks for assurance that he will get some return on the money he spends. When he offers her a generous income (but one which will not be completely owned by her until she has been faithful for five years), Valérie rejects the offer: "Toujours des marchés! les bourgeois n'apprendront jamais à donner! . . . tu étiquettes tout!" (CB 227). Crevel finally capitulates and offers to put one-half of his fortune in Valérie's name.

This is still a monetary deal, but Valérie categorizes it otherwise: "Voilà aimer . . . Eh! bien, amour pour amour" (CB 228). It could be argued that parting with a large sum of money is proof of sincere love on the part of a bourgeois for whom the pecuniary contaminates all relations. However, Valérie's example of a sign of love in return is a manifest joke which Crevel misses. She abandons Hector, an old man whom she has never loved and who (having exhausted all sources of money to give to her) has only escaped previous expulsion because of his value as a tool in applying leverage to exploit Crevel to the fullest. Valérie's deceiving of Crevel can be seen as an anti-gift. Captivated by capitalist values, he believes poverty to be the worst misfortune and espouses such dictums as: "Je suis de mon temps, j'honore l'argent!" (CB 322). In fact, all of Crevel's relationships, whether with his first wife, his mistresses, his daughter or Valérie, centre around money and are tainted by it. When he is defrauded of his wealth, it is as if the anti-gift were flowing back to him due to his lack of compassion for others, such as Adeline.

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Crevel's former marriage to an ugly and stupid woman (whom he never loved but married for her dowry) contrasts with his marriage to his beautiful, beloved Valérie who, he feels, will be an asset to him in his political career. His new relationship, however, has a contaminating influence on his bonds with his daughter, Célestine. He loved Célestine so much that he refrained from sex with his wife to avoid having another child with whom Célestine would have to share her father's money. Prior to Célestine's marriage to Victorin, he promises his future son-in-law that he will not remarry, so they can be assured of inheriting his complete fortune. However, the rise in favour of Valérie signals a corresponding decline in his affection for his daughter and her attachment to him. While the financial wedge Valérie drives between them receives the most attention, the rift in the bonds of love are still significant. Threats of pecuniary loss do not coerce Victorin and his wife into accepting Valérie. Contact between Célestine and

Crevel ceases entirely as their bonds weaken. Crevel compares his anticipated attachment to a child he may have with Valérie with how he now feels for Célestine.[21] However, no child is produced, and their former parent-child bonds show great resiliency when she discovers her father is dying and rushes to his bedside.

Valérie is the love child showered with gifts from her natural father, Montcornet, who, through his gifts, gives her a taste for the life of the wealthy and leads her to believe that it is her rightful place. The flow of gifts, however, diminishes once Montcornet marries into the nobility for social prestige. He does provide his illegitimate daughter with a dowry, but it is sufficient only to obtain a husband of the ilk of Marneffe, a corrupt bourgeois office employee incapable of any social promotion on his own merit. Valérie and her mother had been led to believe that Montcornet would arrange a much more attractive alliance for his daughter; the result is that the mother dies from the disappointment, and Valérie remains embittered. She is soothed somewhat by the generous gifts of money her father continues to send her from time to time as well as by the hope of a substantial inheritance, but she gets nothing when he dies. Part of her vicious, relentless attack on Adeline can be explained if Adeline is viewed as a substitute figure for the comtesse de Montcornet. Adeline is originally a peasant, but she does hold the position of a respected woman in the upper levels of society, and Valérie is intent on destroying her financially and inflicting pain on her emotionally.

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[21] A parallel exists with the preference Julie d'Aiglemont shows in *La femme de trente ans* for the child born out of a love relationship over any produced out of duty in a loveless marriage. Julie is the biological mother of both children, but her bond with the duty child has been contaminated by her feelings of suppression in the patriarchy. As a result, no limit exists to the gifts given the ungrateful, heartless love child whereas the duty child is excluded from the flow of maternal gifts of love.

In this respect, Valérie seems like a female Vautrin, wreaking havoc as she takes out her vengeance on society. She differs significantly from a courtesan, such as Josépha, even though on the surface they are similar. For example, Josépha abandons Crevel because Hector is more generous with gifts; then she mocks Hector (rather than showing gratitude) and leaves him for a wealthy duke who has the resources to give her more; but she never has the goal of destroying a family. Her overt exploitation of wealthy men is the only route available to obtain the funds required to advance her career as an artist: talent, while necessary, will get her nowhere without financial backing. The most striking difference between them is that Josépha (a Jewess who, according to Crevel, has "l'instinct des premiers Hébreux pour l'or et les bijoux" [CB 65]) displays a capacity for empathizing with others which is totally absent in Valérie whose semblance of piety and gifts to the church are but a pretense. Josépha's sensitivity to the plight of others is evident when Hector shows up penniless at her door and later when Adeline comes searching for him. She turns down Hector's request to use the duke's influence to obtain him a position in Normandy because she knows, given Hector's incorrigible libertine nature and the morals of rural France, that he would be swiftly expelled. Instead, she generously sets him up with a business and a young beauty, Olympe. In this way, she shows her gratitude for what Hector previously gave her: "je suis prête à tout faire pour toi! Tu es mon père, tu m'as lancée! c'est sacré" (CB 359). Thus, the gift can be seen as flowing towards Hector due to his prior gifts. While the gifts from Hector are largely payments for the privilege of possessing Josépha, they are made in the form of gift, and some bonds form as a result.

Adeline visits Josépha with some trepidation, yet she cannot resist the visit; she is driven by a desire to find Hector and a curiosity to see a woman capable of extracting enormous gifts/payments from men. Josépha never intentionally means any harm to Adeline whom she respects as "la plus sainte image de la Vertu . . .[et] une martyre" (CB 385); she shows compassion, as well as a desire to erase part of her responsibility in the affair, by launching an intensive search for Hector. Rather than blaming Josépha, Adeline sees her as "la victime de la Société" (CB 385) and expresses gratitude for the young woman's gifts to Hector when he was destitute and for her offer to try to find him. Locating Hector is a very difficult task. Olympe abuses him despite the generous gifts she receives and is deserted by him in favour of another opportunist, whom he then leaves for a young girl, Atala. Hector buys Atala from her parents, and she is very happy to do whatever he desires in return for his gifts of clothes and chocolate.

The old libertine has lost sight of accepted morality and even asks if he can bring Atala home. Adeline attempts to rectify the damage Hector causes by proposing to educate the child in Christian morality and to provide her an honest husband. Physical force is required to separate Atala from her former benefactor/buyer which indicates that she is far from a willing recipient of the new gifts. Whereas Hector's former mistresses ardently exploit him and feel no love for him, Atala, the innocent child, is faithful to him; the love and devotion of the child flow back to him in return for what she perceives as his gifts and kindness. Previously, before Adeline discovers Hector is the man with whom Atala is living, she tries to convince the young girl that she should marry him. Atala's question concerning marriage: "Est-ce que ça sera plus amusant?" (CB 443) and with regard to a married woman: "Qu'a-t-elle plus que moi?" (CB 443) serve to underline her innocence, but these questions also tend to raise doubts about the established rules of the patriarchy which has institutionalized marriage. This, however, would be a feminist perspective rather than that of a supporter of the patriarchy (such as Balzac) who, like Adeline, would give Joseph's wife as an example from the lower class of "une honnête femme" (CB 443); that is, one whose marriage is sanctioned by the church and will thus be blessed. Joseph's wife expresses the intention of keeping the gift from Adeline moving. Not only will she repay the money loaned, but she states: "Si je fais fortune, vous puiserez un jour dans notre bourse, je rendrai par vos mains aux autres le secours que vous nous avez apporté" (CB 444). Atala may be drawn into the family circle (where gift usually circulates the most freely) because Joseph proposes his son as a husband when he hears that Adeline plans to supply a dowry, which will raise Atala's value on the marriage market. Joseph's offer is that of a father interested in securing what he considers a good deal for his son.

Resistance to Woman as a Commodity

The majority of the novels' female characters try to make the best of a situation to which they see no alternative and accept the way they are reduced to the status of a commodity circulating in the patriarchal system of the early nineteenth century. However, exceptions can also be found; two notable pockets of resistance are Balzac's la Fosseuse and Stendhal's Lamiel, who, although very different, are similar in their refusal to abide by the rules of society.

La Fosseuse, in *Le médecin de campagne*, is the embodiment of everything that is feminine but, at the same time, she is the antithesis of woman as a commodity or of a person with the remotest affinities to capitalism. Benassis describes her as "une plante dépaysée, mais une plante humaine" (MC 477), and indeed she is completely out of step with the pecuniary pursuits of her time. No place exists for her in society, even though she is a very social creature, a quality she shows in her preference for playing the role of slave to a handless, dishonest little boy rather than being alone. She is a totally giving being who has been endowed with the ability to delight in completely non-utilitarian expenditures. In this respect, Georges Bataille would see her as demonstrating the true essence of humanity:[22] "elle . . . s'achetait des rubans . . . sans penser à son pain du lendemain. Puis si quelque fille . . : désirait sa croix de cuivre . . . ou son cordon de velours, elle les lui donnait, heureuse de lui faire plaisir, car elle vit par le coeur" (MC 478-79). She again clearly demonstrates Bataille's *consumation* and rejects capitalism's *consommation* when, rather than stick with her assigned sewing task, she escapes to the outdoors to gather mushrooms and truffles as a present for the doctor. She feels guilty for not contributing on the utilitarian side but is incapable of change. Benassis recognizes her inability to fit into society from both spiritual and physical perspectives and provides for her through his gifts, which render la Fosseuse, in effect, a kept woman. She differs from other kept women in that sexual relations are completely absent. Her refusal of marriage indicates that, although frivolous in other areas, she is capable of great perspicacity concerning the plight of married women: "Je ne me sens pas d'humeur à aller porter la soupe aux champs ou à mener une charrette, à sentir la misère de ceux que j'aimerais sans pouvoir la faire cesser, à tenir des enfants sur mes bras toute la journée" (MC 484). La Fosseuse is not prepared to surrender her independence for a life of misery and imposed labour.

Euphrasie, in *La peau de chagrin*, is another woman who loves her liberty and whose definition of the virtuous woman forms a bleak contrast with the pleasures and happiness of her carefree life as a courtesan: "La vertu! . . . Se donner pendant toute la vie à un être détesté, savoir élever des enfants qui vous abandonnent" (PC 116). The narrator describes Euphrasie as "le vice sans âme" (PC 114), but if she is, the patriarchy in which she is situated must accept some of the responsibility because she abandons the morally correct position for a woman in her society when she is deserted for a woman with an inheritance.

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[22] Georges Bataille, *La part maudite* précédé de "La notion de dépense" (1949, 1933; Paris: Minuit, 1967); see in particular 95-97, 224.

Julie d'Aiglemont, in *La femme de trente ans*, also decries the plight of married women: "Le mariage . . . : pour l'homme la liberté, pour la femme des devoirs . . . le mariage . . . me semble être une prostitution légale" (FT 1114). (The view of marriage as legalized prostitution expressed by Balzac's character was also the opinion of Stendhal.[23]) As a member of the wealthy nobility, Julie does not face a life of drudgery, but she is deeply embittered by the restraints which society puts on her relationships; she is enslaved to her husband and is an additional example of a woman whose circulation, as a wife, is forbidden by the rules of the patriarchy.

Marie de Verneuil, in *Les Chouans*, is another woman who has a very pessimistic view of marriage. She resists marriage to the marquis, whom she loves; he sees her gift of herself to him as attaining happiness, but she does not. Marriage is an anti-gift, and it is only through her own sacrifice and by refusing the gift that she can truly give to him: "N'ai-je pas eu le courage de renoncer à vous, pour vous! . . . une maîtresse est la seule femme qui soit sûre des sentiments qu'un homme lui témoigne . . . je préfère un amour passager, mais vrai . . . je ne veux pas faire votre malheur" (C 1165-67). Marie, like Féder, considers love to be a transient experience and does not wish to spoil her giving through the fetters of marriage. Rather than the financial and social security marriage would bring her, she prefers the freedom to give him his liberty.

Stendhal's Lamiel also offers considerable resistance to the plight of women as commodities in the patriarchy. Gift functions in *Lamiel* to completely upset the gender roles in society and Lamiel, a free spirit, goes counter to the religious morality and patriarchal rules of her period. For example, she goes for a walk in the woods with a young man because her uncle and the priest warn against it. While other women are actively pursued by men and, in effect, purchased by them,

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[23] Fernand Rude, *Stendhal et la pensée sociale de son temps* (1967; Brionne: Montfort, 1983) 95.

Lamiel goes in quest of a lover and pays him for his services. Jean Berville cannot believe his good fortune: "elle paye bien et elle est si jolie!" (L 972). Lamiel is very generous and considerate; she gives an initial sum, then the agreed fee and finally a bonus: she does not want to cheat Jean out of other earnings missed because of her. Lamiel is not searching to gratify any sexual urge or love impulse: "Elle n'avait aucune disposition à faire l'amour . . . Ce qui déconsidérait l'amour à ses yeux, c'est qu'elle voyait les femmes les plus sottes du village s'y livrer à l'envi" (L 944); "le ciel lui avait donné une âme ferme, moqueuse et peu susceptible d'un sentiment tendre" (L 937). Her curiosity and desire to escape boredom are the forces which drive her into relationships.

At Rouen, César "la comblait de cadeaux" (L 989), but his gifts neither buy Lamiel's affection nor prevent her boredom. She reflects that this should not be the case because she has deviated from socially sanctioned behaviour; that is, misconduct should bring pleasure. Lamiel does not truly believe her behaviour to be evil; she is amoral[24] rather than immoral. Sansfin (in a manner similar to Vautrin-Herrera whose relationship with Lucien will be explored in the next chapter) would render Lamiel corrupt like himself, but he does not succeed; later, Lamiel remains "sans malice au fond du coeur" (L 1013).[25] Clément notes her basic goodness in spite of her deviance from Christian morality, and Lamiel's facile gift of her body functions to question the correctness of the prevailing moral position of early nineteenth-century France that is represented. She offers supportive arguments against anyone who would consider her immoral: "Ne suis-je pas maîtresse de moi? à qui est-ce que je fais tort? A quelle promesse est-ce que je manque?" (L 1024).

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[24] Jean-Jacques Hamm, préface, *Lamiel*, par Stendhal (Paris: Flammarion, 1993) 10.

[25] Sansfin's search for a substitute (for his unattractive physical self) through which to act is also seen in his reflection about the body of a young, dead man: "Voilà un beau corps vacant, se disait-il; pourquoi mon âme ne peut-elle pas y entrer?" (L 902).

For d'Aubigné, Lamiel is a trophy to be displayed: "Si je la désire, c'est pour montrer mon luxe; c'est pour la montrer à l'Opéra et au bois de Boulogne" (L 1005). From d'Aubigné's viewpoint, gift plays an important role in acquiring the trophy: "Il faut que les cadeaux arrivent, comme la foudre, le lendemain de votre défaite, et que vous, la première, croyiez avoir affaire à un jeune seigneur opulent et jetant l'argent par la fenêtre" (L 1005). When Lamiel locks him out of her bedroom, he goes on living with her. For him, public display of the commodity takes priority over private enjoyment of it. Although others envy his possession, given the opportunity, he would replace Lamiel with a mistress from the upper nobility who would assure the parvenu that he belongs there.

Lamiel, in ceasing to give herself physically, makes a strong assertion of her independence and reaffirms what she had previously stated: "Dieu me délivre des amoureux! J'aime mieux ma liberté que tout" (L 992). Lamiel keeps César's gifts and steals half his money (an act which could be equated with the splitting of assets when a marriage dissolves) but feels no obligation to give in return. The gifts given by d'Aubigné do not serve to form bonds either, nor do they bring happiness. Men are playthings to her as women are to masculine characters in other novels. Rather than expressing gratitude for what she has received from d'Aubigné, she promises to give herself to another if he is willing to satisfy what appears to be her desire for revenge and for distraction at d'Aubigné's expense.

Conclusion

During the period when Stendhal and Balzac were writing their novels, some, such as the Saint-Simonians, Charles Fourier and Flora Tristan, were actively opposing the way women were treated. According to Claire Goldberg Moses in her book *French Feminism in the Nineteenth Century*, most of the concerns centred around education and marriage. Men made the laws, and the laws favoured males. In the early fifteenth century, Christine de Pisan had demanded that women's education be reformed and the request had been repeated over the centuries, but it was not until the 1850s that schools for girls began to become a reality. In the 1820s and 1830s, the main period upon which I am focusing, women were still severely hampered in achieving any degree of economic independence through their lack of education and because of societal prejudices that disqualified them from adequately paying jobs. Their reliance on men for financial support made them easy targets for exploitation both within and outside of marriage. Some courageous Saint-Simonian women took the initiative and tried to show by their own example that change was possible. A young woman, Claire Démar, defiantly advocated free love and the abolition of the institution of motherhood, but the ostracism she felt after her declarations resulted in her suicide in 1833.[26] Another Saint-Simonian, Pauline Roland, was determined to be a mother without accepting financial support from the child's father. While she was relatively successful in the 1830s, she encountered problems in the 1840s and 1850s and in the end asked the father of her eldest child for help--help which he did not give.

For many women, marriage represented imprisonment and enslavement from which no escape was possible because divorce, which was introduced during the Revolution and then limited by Napoleon, was abolished under the Restoration and not reintroduced until 1884. Flora Tristan (1803-1844), who married young for financial security and then left her husband because she could no longer tolerate the loveless union, was a major promoter of the feminist cause during the early 1840s when she attempted to get workers and women to join forces for a common liberation. The idea of the association of workers and women was not a new one. For example, two issues of *La tribune des femmes*, a newspaper founded in 1832, bore the slogan "With the emancipation of woman [w]ill come the emancipation of the worker,"[27] and as far back as 1808 the utopian socialist Charles Fourier had equated social progress with advances in liberating women.[28]

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[26] Moses 78.

Today, writers like Janet Todd and Luce Irigaray see patriarchy as still very firmly in place although some gains have been made in areas such as divorce.[29] Often feminists have supported equal rights for women, but for Irigaray this is a false route to follow. Women must abandon the pursuit of equality if they truly want to escape patriarchy in which they, society and relations in general are defined in terms of men. Irigaray argues that attempts by women to infiltrate the hierarchical structure and system of authority should be abandoned. Such institutions as the family with the male as head, which have been accepted as universal values or human truths,[30] should be recognized as part of the patriarchy to which they lend support. The patriarchy must be rejected in its totality to allow women to escape the system that Irigaray sees as exploiting them, not only sexually, but economically, culturally and socially.[31]

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A close look at the gifts in the novels of Stendhal and Balzac reveals a great deal about the two authors' representations of gender relationships. Nurturing and self-abnegation are portrayed as coming naturally to many female characters; for example, much of Adeline's giving seems spontaneous, and the same is evident for Mme de Rênal (RN) and Esther (SM) who will be discussed in more detail in the chapter on sacrifice. On the other hand, some female characters appear to have been conditioned by their society to accept a subservient, giving role and to recognize male characters as their masters. Although this conditioning is generally more complete in Balzac's novels, exceptions can be found. For example, Balzac's Valérie rebels, and Stendhal's Valentine (like the majority of Balzac's female characters) subordinates her desire and love for Féder to her duty as Boissaux's wife. Part of the explanation for the differences in the characters can be found in the attitudes of the authors. Stendhal believed that the education of women needed to be dramatically improved.[32] The strengths, abilities and high intelligence of his female characters, such as Lamiel and Mathilde de La Mole, indicate that, in his mind, women were far from secondary beings. In fact, a mockery is made of his male characters, such as M. de Rênal and Boissaux, who consider women inferior. Although Stendhal felt marriage unfairly subordinated women, given his own attachment to the mother he lost as a child and the portrait he paints of Mme de Rênal as the loving, giving mother, it is unlikely that he would have gone so far as to favour the abolition of motherhood.

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[27] Moses 63.

[28] Keith Taylor, *The Political Ideas of the Utopian Socialists* (London: Cass, 1982) 113. Moses refers to the same ideas expressed by Fourier: Moses 92.

[29] Theodore Kemper gives an indication of patriarchal values continuing in our society when he writes: "Males are expected to achieve and dominate, whereas females are expected to be giving and nurturant." Theodore D. Kemper, *A Social Interactional Theory of Emotions* (NY: Wiley, 1978) 319.

[30] Foucault's theory that truth is a historical construct, rather than something possessing eternal or universal qualities, is applicable here.

[31] Irigaray 160, 185.

Balzac was a strong supporter of the family and religion as institutions necessary to maintain order in society, and his representations of women tend to support these views. Adeline, the dutiful wife and mother, suffers greatly but remains an example of virtue to be imitated. It appears that, for Balzac, the injustices faced by women (such as the pain Adeline's husband inflicts) are regrettable, but that Adeline's choice of submission is the correct one. Adeline, the great giver, is the favoured role model, a fact made more apparent by the presence of Valérie, the great taker. On several levels, Valérie lacks the qualities needed to be a gift-giving mother. The first is physical: she is childless and miscarries, indications of her inability to give life. The second is her attitude towards pregnancy. Although she plays the role of the expectant mother who provides the gift of a child out of love, her true thoughts are focused on the maximization of benefits to herself. She fails as a mother on another level also in that she neglects her stepson. The sickly child does not live at home, and Valérie makes a pretense of concern for him only to extract more funds from Hector Hulot. Lisbeth, in her role of vengeful, childless spinster, is a degraded representation of a woman in comparison to Adeline, but even spiteful Lisbeth demonstrates some motherly giving. For example, she visits the little Marneffe, and in the next chapter that deals in part with the possibilities of the gift as a facilitator in the formation of "family" bonds, Lisbeth will be discussed in the role of a mother to Steinbock.

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[32] Rude 94.

From one perspective, Valérie makes effective use of her beauty capital to dominate males in a society which would otherwise subjugate her. Such behaviour, however, does not fall within the novel's prescribed boundaries of acceptable morality, and Valérie must be punished. Although she repents on her deathbed, her revolt against the patriarchy continues, to the detriment of her repentance. She declines offers of medical assistance which might have prevented her death because no life for her is acceptable now that her beauty, her main weapon of defence, has been destroyed. Valérie is a further development of characters such as Flore (R) who will be studied in the next chapter. Flore is less strong than Valérie (and thus no match for Philippe Bridau), but their similarities include their manipulations (intended to make gifts flow in their direction), their childlessness and their lack of gift-giving, which negates their femininity. As well, both lose their instrument of destruction (that is, their beauty) and suffer a horrible death from a form of venereal disease--an anti-gift passed to them from a man.

Valérie is atypical of Balzac's representations of women in that she possesses a very strong will and refuses to accept the role that society would impose upon her. She is closer to Stendhal's female characters, who tend to plot their own course of action rather than acquiesce to the roles to which the patriarchal rules would subjugate them. Although Stendhal's female characters find themselves in a patriarchal society very similar to the one which Balzac's characters inhabit, their defiance of that society tends to increase their nobility; Balzac's female characters who challenge the system become monsters to be punished. Strong characters such as Lamiel and Mathilde de La Mole (who will be studied, respectively, in Chapters 2 and 3) have a nobility and an existence that does not centre completely around the role of wife and mother. Even a character like Mme de Rênal, who is an idealization of a mother and initially defines herself entirely within the imposed limits of mother and wife, eventually breaks loose and follows her feelings of love for Julien, rather than continuing to obey the patriarchy's rules. Lamiel is perhaps the strongest of Stendhal's women. From a young age, she actively *creates* her own role whereas Mathilde only *imitates* an ideal of a heroic role and Mme de Rênal remains subservient to her society's laws for a considerable period.

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In the novels of Stendhal and Balzac, gifts *by* women tend to be true gifts, whereas gifts by male characters are often advance payments for commodities; that is, what the males give falls in the commercial sphere. (It is worthy of note that Balzac's great misers tend to be male. Two of these--Grandet and Séchard--are discussed in the next chapter in an attempt to reveal what the absence of gift does to family relationships.) The market transactions that are executed in the guise of gifts *of* and *to* women are not true gifts since the aim is the *acquisition* of a desirable object. In the novels, the men seek different types of capital, which the women possess in varying amounts and combinations. Beauty capital, when coupled with virginity, can lead to marriage as in the case of the young Adeline, but in the absence of virginity the female character is excluded from the marriage exchange as in the case of Lydie. Female characters who are successful at marketing their beauty to several buyers outside of marriage include Lamiel, Mariette, Josépha and Valérie. What is given to them by suitors in the form of gift is really a combination of payment for their company and a signal to society of their importance, which (in their opinion) is demonstrated by the extent of their expenditures on their objects. The façade of gift becomes apparent in that what is given/paid aims at the enhancement of the public display of the woman/object; conspicuous consumption, which was theorized at the end of the nineteenth century by Thorstein Veblen, was already well represented in the novels of Balzac and Stendhal.

Another type of capital desired by male characters involves social status. Although Clotilde de Grandlieu is described as ugly, she is ardently pursued by Lucien since marriage to her will almost certainly guarantee his social advancement. A final type of capital that attracts male characters is money; for example, Graslin seeks Véronique solely for the financial capital offered by her father. Other examples include Rênal and Boissaux who both find themselves in the fortunate position, in their opinion, of husband to a beautiful and wealthy woman.

In the novels I have selected for study, female characters give abundantly, but little flows back to them in return. Male characters (such as Hector Hulot or M. de Rênal) tend to expect their wives to obey them unquestioningly and seldom display any remorse for the uni-directional movement of gifts. Although, on the one hand, it could be argued that the chaste wife is necessary to ensure the paternity of the husband, on the other hand, a strong case could be made for the argument that chastity has more to do with enforcing patriarchal supremacy than anything else. Even after female characters have exceeded the age for childbearing and the offspring have attained the age of majority, they still must abide by the master's commands; the patriarchal chief dominates eternally over his possessions.

With regards to marriage, the problem originates in the commercial exchange between two males; the woman passes from her first possessor, her father, to the second and last (assuming her husband does not die) if she is to retain the respect of the patriarchal society in which she lives. It would be inaccurate to refer to the husband and wife as marriage partners, since the imbalance in power is too great to speak of anything that resembles a cooperative partnership. From the outset the woman is reified and relegated to the status of an object sold by her father and purchased by her husband. The father (such as Sauviat or Goriot) may have the best of intentions but misjudges the reality of human relations and of the social structure. Whereas everything else may be for sale due to the contaminating influence of those market based exchange relationships that appear to have infiltrated all aspects of life, happiness remains an item apart; that is, it has no monetary price tag. Césarine Birotteau and Marguerite Claës are two female characters whose joy in marriage contrasts sharply with the grief most find. Although money is definitely involved, it remains an extraneous element; the basis of the relationship is founded upon reciprocal gifts that involve love between the woman and man as symbolized by the rings exchanged between Marguerite and Emmanuel. Glimmers of hope also exist for Marguerite's sister Félicie: her love may exert a moderating influence on Pierquin who has difficulty seeing anything outside the commercial frame of reference in which habit has entrenched him.

Moments of happiness are snatched by female characters, such as Mme de Rênal, Valentine and Julie d'Aiglemont, when they are near their lovers, but the weight of the patriarchy hangs menacingly over them: they are well aware of the rules which forbid their circulation and the penalties for disobedience. A trade-off exists between the virtue and respect which the chaste woman commands and the freedom (albeit at times limited) of the circulating courtesan. In the society portrayed in these novels, virtue and independence are mutually exclusive elements; yet no matter which route the women choose, or the extent of their gifts, they typically occupy a subordinate position: men who control the money direct their lives. It is as if, in the eyes of Stendhal and Balzac, an equal exchange between the sexes in which enduring bonds would form might occur only in the absence of pecuniary considerations; that is, only an exchange on the level of the gift might create bonds and a relationship agreeable to both male and female characters. In the next chapter, I shall examine, first, the gift as a means of facilitating the formation of bonds that build a sense of community within a large group and, secondly, the gift as a means of establishing "family" bonds between people with no genealogical ties.

Chapter 2 The Stranger and the Gift

In the previous chapter, I described some of the ways in which gifts of and to women are portrayed by both Balzac and Stendhal as playing an important role in the revelation of gender relationships in the market economy of early nineteenth-century France. In this chapter I should like to turn to a consideration of some more positive constructions of gift as a resistance to economic exchange, capable of functioning to establish human bonds between characters and groups. In his classic study of forms of symbolic exchange, Bronislaw Malinowski argues that there is a "deep tendency to create social ties through exchange of gifts."[1] My primary objective here will be to examine the use made of gift by Stendhal and Balzac in their representations of the creation and maintenance of social ties.

This chapter is divided into two parts. Part 1 first examines an idealized group setting for the gift in *Le curé de village* and *Le médecin de campagne*, where gift functions as a catalyst for the creation of a utopia. I then turn to *Les paysans*, where gift is dysfunctional. Part 2 passes from exchange with a group to exchange with an individual gift-recipient. Here I shall be particularly concerned with the formation of "family" bonds between those not related genealogically. Attention will also be paid to the durability of traditional family bonds in the face of infringement by bourgeois monetary values. Characters who present especially interesting features in this respect are Lamiel, Flore Brazier (R), Lisbeth Fischer (CB), Rastignac (PG and SM), Lucien Chardon de Rubempré (IP and SM) and Julien Sorel (RN).

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[1] Bronislaw Malinowski, *Argonauts of the Western Pacific. An Account of Native Enterprise and Adventure in the Archipelagoes of Melanesian New Guinea*, pref. Sir James George Frazer (1922; London: Routledge, 1983) 175. Randall Collins makes a similar point in his discussion of Mauss: "Gifts link people together both as individuals and as one family or tribe to another." Randall Collins, *Theoretical Sociology* (NY: Harcourt, 1988) 419.

Part 1: Gift Exchange involving a Group

Generalized exchange involving a group and emphasizing duties is often contrasted with restricted exchange, which is limited to two individuals and stresses rights. Trust and interpersonal relationships which are seen to develop through generalized exchange are believed to lead to group social ties. Ferdinand Toennies's distinctions between *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft* underline the differences between generalized and restricted exchange: with *Gemeinschaft*, a strong sense of community, coherence and permanence exists in a sharing environment; with *Gesellschaft,* a movement from community to commercial transactions occurs in which cooperation is replaced by adversarial competition, permanence by ephemerality, cohesion by fragmentation. Power and status weaken or completely dissolve the trust and solidarity characteristic of the equality of generalized exchange systems, with the result that enduring social ties are not created through exchange and strangers remain isolated. According to Randall Collins, for Toennies "the shift to the modern type is *not* considered to be progress but a loss of the personal relationships found in *Gemeinschaft* as a result of the pressures of an exploitive and impersonal economic system."[2]

Drawing on his work among the Moose people of Burkina Faso, Alan Fiske argues along similar lines for the importance of gift exchange in establishing "communal solidarity, belonging, sharing, generosity, love, and kindness": [3]

> [A]nthropological literature abounds with descriptions of societies in which gift giving, selfless sharing, wholesale appropriation, offerings of tribute, reciprocity and turn taking, and other such "noneconomic" forms of interaction are common, while overt selfish maximization and *rational* concern with profit making are rare.[4]

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[2] Collins 14.

[3] Alan Page Fiske, *Structures of Social Life: The Four Elementary Forms of Human Relations* (NY: Free Press, 1991) 390.

[4] Fiske 239.

Fiske italicizes the stem or word *ratio* to reinforce his argument which attacks the assumption "that people are generally '*ratio*nal' in the original sense of being concerned with the *ratio* of benefits to costs."[5] He disputes the notion "that humans are inherently self-interested rational economic (or personal utility) maximizers."[6] For him, "there is no intrinsic reason why we should suppose with Thomas Hobbes that normal people are fundamentally selfish, inherently competitive, or individualistic by nature."[7] He cites Audrey Richard's example of the Bemba people who "valued a reputation for giving, not for having"[8] and goes on to argue against the maximization of utility: "[O]bservation suggests that people do not maximize in any absolute sense. Normal people never actually sacrifice everything for money."[9]

Malinowski had previously reached similar conclusions in *Argonauts of the Western Pacific*, declaring that it is a "preposterous . . . assumption that man . . . should be actuated by pure economic motives of enlightened self-interest."[10] He points to the "fundamental human impulse to display, to share, to bestow" and rejects "calculating, cold egotism, the possibility of enjoyment by man of utilities for their sake."[11] The generalized exchange system Malinowski examines has "no utilitarian purpose"[12] and "is not based on a simple calculation of utility, of profit and loss, but . . . satisfies emotional and aesthetic needs of a higher order than the mere gratification of animal wants."[13] No basic differences exist in the nature of capitalist men and those studied by Malinowski; like the capitalist, "the Kula native loves to possess and therefore desires to acquire and dreads to lose, . . .[but] the social code of rules, with regard to give and take by far overrides his natural acquisitive tendency. . . . Meanness, indeed, is the most despised vice, . . . while generosity is the essence of goodness."[14] In the Kula exchange described by Malinowski, individuals of approximately equal standing in their respective groups enter into the exchange of symbolic gifts, typically arm shells and necklaces, which circulate from one exchange partner to another, traveling in opposite directions from one group to another.

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[5] Fiske 232.
[6] Fiske 240.
[7] Fiske 398.
[8] Audrey I. Richards, *Land, Labor and Diet in Northern Rhodesia: An Economic Study of the Bemba Tribe* (1939; London: Oxford UP for the International African Institute 1969) 214 quoted in Fiske 364.
[9] Fiske 376.
[10] Malinowski 60.
[11] Malinowski 175.
[12] Malinowski xi.
[13] Malinowski x.

Marcel Mauss, whose *Essai sur le don* was influenced by Malinowski's work, argues (like Malinowski) that obligation, rather than desert or need, is the focal point of gift-giving. The exchange system, which is highly structured and permanent, involves first the obligation to give, followed by the obligation to accept and then to repay. What is given is thus set in perpetual motion.[15] My emphasis will be on what can be accomplished through the gift, such as the development of a *Gemeinschaft* or sense of community and sharing.

* * *

Two of Balzac's characters intent upon using the gift to establish a community are Véronique (CV) and Benassis (MC). In an effort to atone for past errors, both renounce the pursuit of joy on a personal level and dedicate what remains of her/his existence to the betterment of an impoverished area to which s/he is a stranger. This renunciation of personal happiness is necessary in a capitalistic society, according to Georg Lukács, in order to "servir sincèrement et avec abnégation le bien public."[16] Benassis relinquishes all claim to any personal gain from the recipients of his gifts: "il m'est affreux de penser que tant de gens me remercient du peu de bien que je fais ici, quand ce bien est le fruit de mes remords" (MC 575). The same applies to Véronique, who wants to give to a region from which she has taken a "son". She starts out as Tascheron's benefactress but soon exploits her position as a gift-giver; Véronique's position enables her to hide her adulterous relationship with him. Not only does the gift provide her with an excuse for contact with her lover, but it acts to buy his silence: he is obligated to her because of her gifts. For Véronique, gift therefore runs the gamut of functions from evil to benevolence.

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[14] Malinowski 96-97.

[15] Peter Ekeh shows that Mauss was mistaken in part of his interpretation of Malinowski, in that the Kula exchange was not aristocratic and limited to chiefs; it was not carried out on a group to group basis but by separate individuals within a group with their respective Kula partners in other groups. These discrepancies, however, need not concern us here. Peter Ekeh, *Social Exchange Theory: The Two Traditions* (London: Heinemann, 1974) 31-32.

[16] Georg Lukács, *Balzac et le réalisme français*, trans. Paul Laveau (Paris: Maspero, 1967) 24.

Although others see her gifts as coming from a kind and generous spirit, she herself views them as an attempt to repay a debt: "mes bienfaits ne sont pas une offrande, mais une dette" (CV 860). She believes herself unworthy of the praise given to her, considering the motive for her gifts: "Ma vie connue a été une immense réparation des maux que j'ai causés" (CV 868). The injustice of a situation where Tascheron, who is the motive for her goodness, remains condemned, whereas she shares in his guilt and nevertheless is glorified, concerns Véronique immensely. For Bonnet, who encourages Véronique's gift-giving, gift functions to buy forgiveness as Christ's death demonstrates: "tout peut se racheter par les bonnes oeuvres du repentir" (CV 757). These words help soothe Véronique who, in her public confession, expresses the hope that the humiliation it brings, along with what she has given, will redeem her soul.

Self-abnegation is a primary trait among the greatest of Balzac's gift-givers: Goriot reduces his possessions to the barest of essentials so he can give luxuries to his daughters; Herrera lives in a garret, while he provides Lucien with sumptuous quarters. The self-imposed ascetic lifestyle of Véronique and Benassis also contrasts with what they choose to give others. Benassis, who wants to give although simultaneously demonstrating his own indifference to material possessions, inhabits a room that is strikingly austere in comparison to the luxuriousness of the one he gives Genestas. Véronique's asceticism, which takes the form of a harshly imposed penitence, is underlined in the disparity between the lavish dinners she serves others and the meager meals she consumes in isolation.

In the distribution of their gifts, both Véronique and Benassis show discrimination. For example, Benassis very selectively targets his gifts at the poor of the region: they receive free medical care from him whereas no amount of money would suffice to buy his care for a wealthy person he dislikes.[17] By this action, Benassis distances himself from the bourgeois realm of accumulation, in which money commands all, including respect, to move into the domain of philanthropy, in which lucrative opportunities are bypassed in favour of giving; nor does Benassis expect any return on his gift: "Je ne veux ni gloire ni fortune, je ne demande à mes malades ni louanges ni reconnaissance" (MC 409).

Those who live on the margins of society are also gift-recipients, with the gift fulfilling their needs which exist due to their inability to meet normal work expectations. In *Le médecin de campagne*, Benassis addresses Butifer, the poacher/smuggler who is maladjusted to regular work, as "mon enfant" (MC 496). Butifer is, in effect, the "child" who receives care, but he is also the adult who expresses his gratitude for the gift. When Benassis recognizes that Genestas's adopted son (Adrien) needs fresh air and exercise and therefore entrusts his care to Butifer, he acts as a catalyst in a chain of giving. The job allows the woodsman in turn to give his talents to another. Then Genestas reciprocates by his agreement to find a place in the military for Butifer in order to repay Butifer for his help to

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[17] Sansfin, in *Lamiel*, does not charge the poor for his medical services, but the attitude of this giver toward the poor and the insults he receives are very different from the love shown and received by Benassis. The latter genuinely wants to help whereas Sansfin manifests only scorn. The attitude of the giver, which is of crucial importance, will be discussed shortly.

Adrien and to fulfill a commitment previously sanctioned by Benassis. In this instance, the flow of the gift may be sketched as follows:

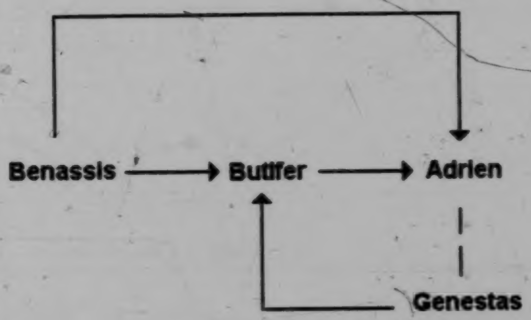

Figure 2: Benassis as a catalyst for further gift-giving

The diagram shows that no tangible gift flows back to Benassis who remains a facilitator of gift exchange. Nothing material flows directly to Genestas either, but in the role of Adrien's father, he receives the gift indirectly through Adrien; that is, because Genestas and Adrien are a family unit, to give to one is to give to both.

In *Le curé de village*, Farrabesche (like Butifer) lives on the margins of a society to which he is maladapted. Through his gifts to Farrabesche, Bonnet (the local priest) sets in motion a ripple effect whereby Farrabesche gives to others who in turn follow his example. Farrabesche, for instance, demonstrates his generous nature in his care of the forest which is a double gift: the poor receive wood and Véronique's trees are preserved; the situation here contrasts with Montcornet's problem in *Les paysans*, caused by peasants who destroy his trees for fuel. The image of Farrabesche is further developed through the caring gifts of hand-crafted items that he makes for his son. The gifts, made from readily available materials, cost nothing monetarily but are priceless because of the time and thoughtfulness that have gone into them: they serve to show a deep love for his son.

Like Bonnet, Véronique singles out Farrabesche as a gift-recipient: she puts him in charge of her farm and obtains the documentation necessary to pardon his past "crimes" and to restore his full rights as a citizen. When Véronique reunites Farrabesche and his lover, Catherine, she gives the couple the happiness that was denied her and Tascheron. Although Bonnet strongly supports Véronique's gifts, he suspects and criticizes her motives because if the gifts are to serve a redemptive purpose they must be dissociated from any malevolent past and given with a pure unadulterated desire to do good. Bonnet expresses the same idea later when Véronique is reluctant to see Grandville. It is not enough to give greatly; the interior sentiments which determine the spirit of the gift must be appropriate; otherwise no return is experienced on the gift in the form of God's forgiveness.

The narrator's comparison of Farrabesche to a dog accentuates the depth of Farrabesche's feelings and the distance which separates him from Véronique. He humbly displays gratitude toward his gift-bearing proprietor because he will never be able to repay her gifts and thus will remain eternally indebted. Typically, gifts are presented at least with the semblance of disinterest, and if someone asks for a return on the gift, it is transformed into a commercial transaction; when Véronique, however, asks Farrabesche to provide her with game, it is more to afford him an opportunity to reciprocate in the gift exchange than it is a desire on her part to recuperate a portion of what she has given. Farrabesche's gift of meat is a tangible recognition of his relationship with Véronique. Although he lacks the resources to give on a scale equivalent to her gifts, the return (albeit small) that he does make facilitates the continued flow of gifts between them. The cup that Farrabesche carves for Véronique's son becomes another token of appreciation given to thank

Véronique for her generosity. When Farrabesche recognizes his limited aptitude to fit into the mainstream of society, he asks Véronique to replace the gift of the job to manage her farm and, at the same time, he provides her with a more qualified recipient for her original gift. Donor and recipient will both profit from the substitutions: the new farmer has money to invest in the operation of Véronique's farm, and Farrabesche is happier keeping a distance between himself and society. The original gift in this instance remains in the family since Catherine's cousin is selected to replace Farrabesche.

Appreciation for Benassis's generosity is illustrated by the foster mother who describes Benassis as "un ami du pauvre! Il n'a jamais demandé son dû à qui que ce soit" (MC 393). When Benassis, who becomes recognized as the father and provider of the region, dies, the cross over his grave is inscribed, "D.O.M. ÇI GÎT LE BON MONSIEUR BENASSIS, NOTRE PÈRE À TOUS PRIEZ POUR LUI!" (MC 602). Scolding sickly young Jacques for having yielded to the temptation to go outside to sing in the sunshine, Benassis sounds very much like a lecturing, doting father, especially since the scene ends shortly after Benassis's promise to send some shirts: "je ne te donnerai plus ni gâteaux de riz, ni bouillons d'escargot, ni dattes fraîches, ni pain blanc. Tu veux donc mourir et désoler ta pauvre mère?" (MC 490).

The image of Benassis as the venerated fatherly provider stands in stark contrast with how people view him initially: the outsider to be opposed. Someone (Benassis later discovers it was Butifer) even shoots at him because of his interference with the group's way of life. Resistance to Benassis is demonstrated, for example, when he undertakes the construction of a road (work which the inhabitants consider equivalent to the reinstitution of "corvées" [MC 417]), and it is not until their own self-interest becomes evident that they show enthusiasm. Benassis's solution to those who are incapable of contributing to the new order that he wants to establish is to expel them at his own expense in a symbolic first purification. The community lacks the outsider's ability for rational analysis to see what is best for the overall good. Two things help to gain the trust of the inhabitants and install him as father of the region: he replaces the priest with one who supports his vision and gives abundant care to the degenerate man who escapes deportation.

Véronique's gifts, in contrast with those of Benassis, meet with no initial opposition. Although she is a stranger, she is hailed as "mother" of the region even before her arrival, and the people of Monténac work together to construct a road as a gift with which to welcome her to the area. It is like a gift given in return by those who have benefited from her previous gifts to them through Graslin; there is anticipation of further gifts also: Véronique plans to continue to enhance the economy.

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Benassis and Véronique redistribute wealth and stimulate development by using religion and money. Both characters, like their creator Balzac, value the Roman Catholic Church as a positive force in organizing society. Bonnet (the priest for Monténac) is indispensible to Véronique, and Benassis explains the essential contribution made by Janvier (the priest for his region): "M. Janvier, le nouveau curé, . . . a été pour moitié dans cette oeuvre de régénération: il a su donner aux moeurs du bourg un esprit doux et fraternel qui semble faire de la population une seule famille" (MC 423). The priest warns against the tendency towards self-interest: "les grandes choses sociales ne se font que par la puissance des sentiments qui seule peut réunir les hommes, et le philosophisme moderne a basé les lois sur l'intérêt personnel, qui tend à les isoler" (MC 505-06). Benassis is aware of these dangers, but he still uses money to awaken the energy linked to man's egoism as a first step toward his goal to create a cooperative commune:

"Maintenant, pour étayer la société, nous n'avons d'autre soutien que l'*égoïsme*. . . . Le grand homme qui nous sauvera du naufrage vers lequel nous courons se servira sans doute de l'individualisme pour refaire la nation" (MC 430).

Money means nothing personally to Benassis and Véronique, which is demonstrated by their ample generosity and by their chosen austere surroundings, yet both recognize its value in motivating development. For example, Véronique takes out a loan to further her work, and Benassis refers to wealth as "un moyen" (MC 427). Gérard no doubt voices their opinion, as well as his own, when he writes: "Quoique je regarde l'argent comme un des plus puissants moyens qui soient donnés à l'homme social pour agir, ce n'est, après tout, qu'un moyen" (CV 803). Money, by itself, holds no special attraction for them, but they are conscious of the potential it has to exert influence on others.

Although Benassis makes no specific reference to the doctrine of Utilitarianism, it would appear that this character in *Le médecin de campagne* (published in 1833) embodies many ideas formulated by Jeremy Bentham (1748-1832) and James Mill (1773-1836). Bentham argues that people are "essentially and naturally, egoists,"[18] and for James Mill, who agrees with Bentham, the question is: "How can the moralist persuade every individual to work for the happiness of others in order to arrive at happiness for himself?"[19] The principle of utility, which aimed at bringing the greatest happiness to the greatest number, was considered a scientific formulation: the Utilitarians, in effect, thought that morals could be treated as a science. The central problem was how man, given his egoistic nature, could be persuaded to act in a disinterested manner. The task of government was to find the means to make personal interest coincide with the general interest. Although it was not an easy venture, neither was it felt to be an impossible one, and the Utilitarians, who were extremely optimistic, thought that man was capable of indefinite progress. Benassis, who exemplifies this optimistic faith in what can be accomplished when activities are coordinated to produce a fusion of individual and general interest, makes a direct appeal to man's egoism and the ubiquitous material interests of the period to orchestrate an aura of prosperity throughout the region. During the early nineteenth century, other expressions of optimism can be found in the writings of French utopian theorists, such as Charles Fourier and the Saint-Simonians, and in the "Enrichissez-vous!" slogan of French politician François Guizot, who exercized a great deal of influence during the reign of Louis-Philippe. Although the doctrine expounded by the Saint-Simonians advocated economic development as a means to social improvement, emphasis was also on the creation of a community which would redistribute wealth. Balzac's character, Benassis, would thus be closer to the doctrine of the Saint-Simonians than to the ideas of someone like Guizot, who appealed strictly to self-interest to enhance France's prosperity in the 1830s and 1840s; and Benassis would be closer again to the theory expressed by Fourier, who favoured a community with an agricultural base supported by artisans. The ideas of the utopian writers of the period will be discussed in greater detail later in this chapter.

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[18] Elie Halévy, *The Growth of Philosophic Radicalism*, trans. Mary Morris (Boston: Beacon, 1955) 405.
[19] Halévy 464.

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Benassis successfully creates a system of circular exchange using his gifts to initiate the chain. For example, the miller, to whom the doctor has given, in turn provides sacks of flour to the poor. Although Benassis often rejects reciprocal exchange, his gift is not without obligation: "je n'ai point laissé ignorer le prix de mes peines. . . . Si mes paysans ne me paient pas, ils connaissent leurs dettes; parfois ils apaisent leur conscience en m'apportant de l'avoine pour mes chevaux" (MC 434). Although the material rewards he receives and keeps are minimal, the sentiments of pleasure and joy which he experiences as a direct result of his gifts are a strong personal reward: "J'étais joyeux de la joie de ces gens et de la mienne . . . L'affection tacite des habitants est tout ce que j'ai personnellement gagné" (MC 416, 427).

Vigneau's household exemplifies what Benassis is striving to accomplish throughout the region: "Le travail a produit l'argent, et l'argent, en donnant la tranquillité, a rendu la santé, l'abondance et la joie. Vraiment ce ménage est pour moi la vivante histoire de ma commune" (MC 472). Benassis helps to establish the tile maker, and the gratitude of the latter, who wants to give in return, is clear: he would set aside all the orders from which he makes a profit to give priority to requests from Benassis for tiles to be given to others. Another example of generalized exchange is the Fosseuse's furniture which is made by an artisan who wishes to express his gratitude toward Benassis.

Whereas Benassis's gifts set a successful chain of exchange in motion, Delphine's gift of a watch to Rastignac, in *Le père Goriot,* which is supposedly a gift of love, is actually more akin to a payment for his affections and an example of gift's failure to set a chain of exchange in motion. According to Lewis Hyde, a gift is defined as something which one is free to pass on to another;[20] in this case, Delphine's questioning, when she discovers the watch gone, indicates Rastignac was not free to dispose of it, even though his sentiments were honourable and generous. (He pawned the watch to obtain money to help Goriot.) Hyde argues that objects given are secondary in importance to the interpersonal bonds formed through the giving of a gift. For Delphine, however, the retention of the object is paramount, and the bonds securing Rastignac appear threatened to her. The situation is the opposite of that found in *Le médecin de campagne*--it is through the gift's movement that Benassis hopes bonds will be strengthened. The reversal of the gift's function serves to highlight the giver's (here Delphine's) perversion in a capitalist setting.

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[20] Lewis Hyde, *The Gift: Imagination and the Erotic Life of Property* (NY: Vintage, 1979) xiv.

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Benassis is described as the Napoleon of the area, and when he dies the characters question whether the system he has set in motion will continue in the absence of its chief gift-giver and facilitator: "quoiqu'il ait donné son bien à notre pauvre pays, et que nous soyons tous ses héritiers, nous avons perdu notre plus grande richesse, car il faisait tout venir à bien ici. . . . combien est irréparable la perte que nous avons faite" (MC 599, 601). Benassis's parting gifts are, in effect, aimed at perpetuating the cycle, and he expresses his optimism that the gift will continue to circulate. For example, he leaves his home as a shelter for the elderly and the income from his investments and mill as a resource for the destitute in winter. He also provides for the future by giving money for scholarships.

Genestas greatly admires Benassis and plans to try to imitate his gift-giving to bring prosperity to another community; but when the doctor dies, Genestas decides that, upon his retirement, he will come to the same area to continue what has already been set in motion. This signals a hopeful view: from the opening pages (even before the gift-giving Benassis appears) Genestas is portrayed as a person who is very giving and caring towards those in need, and as one who spends very little on himself. For example, he refers to the soldiers under his command as his children and gives them money both willingly and discreetly to pay gambling debts and the like. He empathizes with the foster mother (another generous soul) and gives her money both at the start and at the end of the novel. The second gift is made in memory of Benassis: "il songea . . . à l'esprit bienfaisant de Benassis, et voulut y entrer pour faire en son nom une aumône à la pauvre femme" (MC 599). The spirit of the gift thus remains in effect and keeps the gift circulating even in the doctor's absence; the example here is Genestas who continues to give to the foster mother who in turn will pass the gift to the children.

Hope exists that the work of the benefactress of Montégnac will also continue. The narrator likens Véronique to Christ,[21] and it is probable that her apostles will carry on her efforts. Depending on others for help and advice, she is never self-sufficient to the same extent as Benassis. Bonnet, who has given himself to God, makes significant progress in turning the inhabitants from theft and murder even before Véronique's involvement; and it is Bonnet who urges her to seek someone with the technical expertise necessary to implement the plans they have formulated to develop the area economically. The "dévouement désintéressé" (CV 807) of Gérard, the person she finds for the task, and his willingness to come, bode well for the continuation of Véronique's good deeds. In addition, Véronique has only one child (which means her domain does not face immediate disintegration due to the law of succession) and that child has been educated to continue her work.

Dysfunctional Gift

Whereas gifts in *Le médecin de campagne* and *Le curé de village* reveal the utopian generosity of the characters, in *Les paysans* gifts function to show greed and manipulation in all parts of society: peasants, bourgeois and nobility. It is a dystopia in which gifts are actively pursued and expected by the peasants who see them as a way to tap into the wealth of the rich.

Fourchon's trick, for example, is to extract money from all newcomers: he makes them feel guilty for his loss of an otter which he routinely claims he was about to catch for himself and Mouche, his poor orphaned grandson. When his daughter, la Tonsard, takes his money and promises to buy him new clothes, he protests: "Je t'ai déjà dit que ce serait me ruiner . . . Quand on me croira riche, personne ne me donnera plus rien" (P 95).[22] Each has a role to play and must dress the part, something which Mouche ably shows by "sa presque nudité . . . il était impossible de ne pas se laisser aller aux inspirations de la charité" (P 109). Brossette, who expresses the uselessness of efforts to clothe the peasants, whom he equates with savages, tells Mme de Montcornet that the peasants' poverty is self-inflicted and that their aim is to lead a parasitic existence at Montcornet's expense. Nonetheless, the irreligious young Mouche has been mentored well by his grandfather and successfully extracts food and clothing from the countess. Fourchon explains why he has taught Mouche to seek gifts: "Je lui dis: 'Mouche! crains la prison, . . . Ne vole rien, fais-toi donner! le vol mène à l'assassinat, et l'assassinat appelle la justice e'd'z'hommes . . ." (P 118). Fourchon, an intelligent man who has the system figured out, obviously believes the benefits of gifts are sufficient without exposing oneself to the risks of theft.

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[21] The comparison is similar to Goriot, another of Balzac's giving characters, who is labeled "le Christ de la Paternité" (PG 231).

Like Fourchon, the majority of the peasants do not concern themselves with the morality of their actions but, unlike him, they are not impeded by considerations of legality. For example, old mother Tonsard has no qualms about stealing wood and, after she is chased by Montcornet's guard, the peasants consider whether she should feign sickness in order to extract compensation. According to the narrator: "L'intérêt est devenu, surtout depuis 1789, le seul mobile de leurs idées; il ne s'agit jamais pour eux de savoir si une action est légale ou immorale, mais si elle est profitable. La moralité, qu'il ne faut pas confondre avec la religion, commence à l'aisance" (P 91). Montcornet's offer of a reward for the arrest of those who steal from him has the reverse effect of what he intends; that is, more theft is encouraged as part of the peasants' plot to obtain the reward. Initially, Bonnébault refuses to participate in a scheme to imprison his mother in order to collect Moncornet's reward; however, the reward money has so much appeal that he quickly starts to justify turning his mother over to the authorities: she will be warm and fed in prison. The farcical dispute between the Bonnébaults and Tonsards over who will be arrested is resolved by drawing straws. The "winner", la vieille Tonsard, goes to prison, but some loss is attached to the gain: Mme de Montcornet withdraws her promised gift--the offer of a dowry to Catherine Tonsard.

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[22] Fourchon's lament, when his daughter steals his second piece of money ("Les enfants, c'est la ruine des pères. . . . ne vous mariez jamais! vous n'aurez pas à vous reprocher d'avoir semé de mauvaises graines" [P 107]) is similar to that of Goriot who recognizes the selfishness of his daughters who are not by his side as he is dying ("[N]'ayez pas d'enfants! Vous leur donnez la vie, ils vous donnent la mort" [PG 273]).

The Tonsard family has always excelled at obtaining gifts: "sa famille fut élevée aux dépens de ceux à qui sa femme savait arracher des présents" (P 87). The narrator describes their dwelling as follows: "cette chaumière provenait de trouvailles heureuses ou de dons arrachés par l'importunité" (P 79-80). What they do not obtain by gift they usually steal. Tonsard's land is obtained through the generosity of Montcornet's predecessor, Mlle Laguerre, who gives it to him in exchange for a hundred days of work. The ungrateful Tonsard, who works less than a third of the promised time, protests that no one gave him anything, that he paid for the land through his labour, and that it is of inferior quality.

Mlle Laguerre is partially responsible for Montcornet's problems because the peasants are accustomed to her generosity and to stealing from her with no threat of reprisal: " 'Que Dieu la conserve, la chère dame!' était le mot de tout le monde. . . . Chacun obtenait en effet quelque chose d'elle, en pur don ou indirectement . . . la vieille artiste était exactement pillée" (P 132). Gaubertin, whom Montcornet fires for dishonesty, allows others to steal from Laguerre and enriches himself fraudulently at her expense; he justifies his theft because Laguerre receives more than she would if she managed her own estate. Gaubertin maximizes the flow of gift in his family's direction by choosing Laguerre as his son's godmother. Although she is not a blood relation, the honourary ties make it easier to access her wealth; for example, she pays for Gaubertin's son to be educated in Paris.

La Cochet, Laguerre's maid, also exploits her employer. After Laguerre's death, la Cochet marries, becomes Madame Soudry and passes from a maid during her mistress's life to "la reine": "cent habillements plus riches les uns que les autres, provenant tous de l'immense et splendide garde-robe de Mlle Laguerre . . . Mme Soudry vivait au milieu des dons magnifiques amassés chez sa maîtresse, et que l'ex-bénédictin appelait *fructus belli* . . . [l]es fruits de la guerre" (P 258-59, 1374). (The pun is intentional but goes unnoticed by Madame Soudry.) Laguerre's gifts, both voluntary and forced--that is, stolen, such as the exquisite silverware--are used by Madame Soudry to emulate Laguerre: "elle portait des boucles de diamants aux oreilles, ses doigts étaient surchargés de bagues. . . . un hanneton composé de deux topazes et à tête en diamant, un présent de chère maîtresse, dont on parlait dans tout le département" (P 259). As they are interested in obtaining all they can from Madame Soudry, the servile bourgeois elite of the area flatter her, rather than recognizing that she is devoid of merit: "des bourgeois les plus riches . . . remboursaient en éloges les fines liqueurs et les vins exquis provenant de la cave de chère maîtresse. Les habitués et leurs femmes, véritables usufruitiers de ce luxe, économisaient ainsi chauffage et lumière" (P 260). The actions of the bourgeois appear to be on a different level from the peasants' manoeuvres; the bourgeois want to accumulate at any cost in order to impress others with material possessions whereas the peasants are more interested in basics, such as food and heating, in order to survive.

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In *Le curé de village*, characters replace "le manque d'argent par le dévouement et par le travail" (CV 780). Then, in *Le médecin de campagne*, Balzac portrays the tile maker whose industrious efforts are amply rewarded. Although Benassis strongly supports Catholicism, his tirades against sloth are often more in line with a proponent of the Protestant work ethic as described by Max Weber: "La vie des oisifs est la seule qui coûte cher, peut-être même est-ce un vol social que de consommer sans rien produire" (MC 462). The reverse of these principles is operative in *Les paysans*; in response to Brossette's comments ("Si vous aviez travaillé, vous auriez des rentes . . . Dieu bénit le travail" [P 117]), which would have held true in the two preceding utopias, Fourchon's logic seems strong. Hardworking, honest Niseron is just as poor as he and has a less complete, more monotonous existence; industriousness and honesty, therefore, appear to be counterproductive.

Niseron, the token upright peasant in *Les paysans*, respects the wishes of his rich uncle to leave his wealth to his servant (Arsène), even though legally he could have claimed the inheritance and risen from his own state of poverty. The value of this gesture may be questioned as the inheritance serves only to further enrich the corrupt Rigou whom Arsène marries. Perhaps the ultimate fault lies with Niseron's uncle, the gift-giver who fails to recognize his nephew's merit. Whereas others court Rigou, Niseron dissociates himself from this person whom he sees as a despicable usurer: "Le vieillard maudissait le peu de charité des riches, leur égoïsme le révoltait" (P 223). He strongly supports Courtecuisse's resistance to follow Tonsard's proposal that he give his daughter to Rigou: "Le peuple doit donner aux riches l'exemple des vertus civiques et de l'honneur. Vous vous vendez à Rigou pour de l'or, tous tant que vous êtes!" (P 226).

Courtecuisse, another example of the futility of hard work, has a life of leisure as one of Montcornet's dishonest employees: instead of protecting the count's interests, he lets the other peasants steal, and in exchange, "sa femme et lui recevaient des cadeaux en nature de tous les maraudeurs" (P 164). After Montcornet dismisses him, he purchases a plot of land and becomes an honest, industrious farmer who labours continuously but cannot make enough to pay the interest on the money he owes Rigou; it is at this point that Tonsard suggests that he offer his daughter to the usurer instead.

For Benassis, the bourgeois is the enemy of the indigent, who justifies his theft based on the exploitation of the poor by the bourgeois: "Pour le pauvre, le vol n'est plus ni un délit, ni un crime, mais une vengeance" (MC 460). The absence of nobility in *Le médecin de campagne* results in a simplified scenario because there is no one from whom the peasants expect gifts; in *Les paysans*, charity is almost demanded and regarded as a right, especially since the peasants see Montcornet as a usurper who has no legitimate claim to his title and wealth, a problem which will be discussed further in this chapter and in the next. For the most part, characters in *Le médecin de campagne* succeed in their efforts to elevate themselves, and once elevated they add to the general prosperity of the populace, rather than exploiting the poor as the bourgeois do in *Les paysans*.

Fourchon is astute in his observations of the bourgeois ("Les bourgeois et le gouvernement, c'est tout un! Quéqu'ils deviendraient si nous étions tous riches?...Laboureraient-ils leurs champs, feraient-ils la moisson? Il leur faut des malheureux!" [P 97]), but his fellow peasants do not heed his warning. Rigou, one of the main bourgeois in *Les paysans*, incarnates all that is evil; Marie Tonsard comments: "Vous êtes le diable en personne . . . on dit que vous avez signé un pacte avec lui... . . . --Oui, dit gravement Rigou" (P 298). One would expect some sign of Christian benevolence from Rigou (he is a former monk), but he shows no compassion and concentrates instead upon satisfying his own desires for food, sex and money. An extremely harsh usurer, he exacts work from his peasant debtors, such as Courtecuisse, in exchange for extending interest payment dates. The peasants, who think he is doing them a favour in that their work does not "cost" them in monetary payments,[23] fail to see Rigou as the extortionist he is, both when he encumbers them with exorbitant interest, that they will never be able to pay, and when he benefits from their labour. Instead they blame Montcornet for their misery: "bien des sueurs . . . coulaient pour Rigou, que chacun respectait, tandis que le travail chèrement payé par le général, le seul qui jetât de l'argent dans le pays, lui valait des malédictions et la haine vouée aux riches" (P 248). The narrator suggests that the gifts of Montcornet, who works hard to modify the behaviour of the peasants, might have succeeded in eliminating their antagonism if the bourgeois element had not continued to arouse their hostility against the generous gift-giver. This interference on the part of the bourgeois, besides their own lack of gift-giving and their ability to reverse the flow of gift in their direction, functions to highlight their avarice and perfidy.

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One of the fundamental problems encountered in *Les paysans* is the inequitable distribution of wealth: it is concentrated in the hands of the bourgeoisie and nobility. Although Brossette at times vacillates on the benefits of giving to the poor, he largely supports such gifts. This thinking prefigures that of Marcel Mauss: "[T]he rich must come back to considering themselves--freely and also by obligation--as the financial guardians of their fellow citizens."[24] Brossette tries to persuade the countess to anonymously share her wealth; any hesitation that he may exhibit stems from his desire to curb the peasants' dishonesty: "nous avons affaire à des gens sans religion, qui n'ont qu'une seule pensée, celle de vivre à vos dépens" (P 110). Although he discourages Mme de Montcornet from giving clothes to Mouche because it reinforces dishonest behaviour, he sees gifts as a means of resolving social problems: "Peut-être est-ce providentiel . . . car si madame le veut, nous arriverons, à force de bienfaits et de douceur, à changer ces gens-là" (P 202). Brossette does not try anything different from Bonnet in *Le curé de village,* but because Brossette lacks Bonnet's utopian setting, the results of their similar efforts are very different. Brossette's gift-recipients lack the gratitude of Bonnet's, and their givers are far apart as well. Véronique has the interests of the poor at heart while the countess, who sees charity as an amusing pastime, has no deep caring for the plight of the peasants. For example, she is unconcerned about the large sums spent on her own clothing and busies herself with Mouche only so long as he is visible and then forgets about him. Giving to the poor is a mere diversion for this woman raised in the opulence of the nobility.

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[23] Lukács 31.

[24] Marcel Mauss, *The Gift: The Form and Reason for Exchange in Archaic Society*, fwd. Mary Douglas, trans. W. D. Halls (London: Routledge, 1990) 69.

The same can be said of Véronique when, in her youth, she searches in her mother's pocket for alms or when, as a young childless woman disillusioned by her marriage, she tries to overcome the nullity of her existence by giving such items as clothes to babies and food to the needy elderly. Although she lacks the deeply caring, total abnegation she later manifests at Monténac, she does remain constant in her lack of desire to set herself above the recipients of her gifts or to seek personal recognition for her charity: "Cette bienfaisance active . . . fut ensevelie dans un profond mystère" (CV 673). Her gifts are kept secret in part because her miserly husband opposes her charity and gives her less and less money as he becomes cognizant of her gifts: the less Graslin knows about it, the more she is able to give.

Véronique (once she moves to Monténac), Benassis and Montcornet are strangers to the peasant group in two ways: they come from outside the area, and their wealth sets them above the group members. Véronique is welcomed as is Benassis after a time, but Montcornet is never accepted. All three give abundantly, but Montcornet is not regarded as a parental figure because his gifts are not given in the same spirit as those of Véronique and Benassis.[25] Véronique wants to be a member of the group ("Je suis née du peuple, et veux retourner au peuple" [CV 138]), whereas Montcornet abhors any reference to his humble past ("le général Montcornet, comte de l'Empire, se savait issu d'un ébéniste du faubourg Saint-Antoine, encore qu'il l'oubliât volontiers" [P 164]). His humble origins are a source of derision and serve to justify the attacks against him. Considered a parvenu while other nobles are deemed to have legitimate claims, Montcornet is mockingly referred to as "le Tapissier" (P 281) and, although his properties are pilfered, those of the established nobility are respected. Soudry explains why he would not want Soulanges treated like Montcornet: "le comte de Soulanges a été mon général; il m'a rendu service; il m'a très bien fait régler ma pension" (P 303).

Montcornet's military service proves valuable in preventing his execution by Bonnébault: "Général, dit-il, voilà la troisième fois que vous vous trouvez au bout de mon canon, et voilà la troisième fois que *je vous donne la vie* . . . j'aime les gens qui ont servi l'Empereur" (P 345, my italics). Torn between this allegiance to a fellow soldier of the Emperor and a desire to obtain the money for killing Montcornet before someone else does, Bonnébault tries to negotiate an exchange with Montcornet, so he will not lose money by sparing his life. Gift circulates here, and at least partial bonds have formed as a result: Montcornet gives to Napoleon, and Bonnébault, who feels allied to him because of his gift, is spurred to give as well.

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[25] Pierre Bourdieu states that "it's not what you give but the way you give it." (Pierre Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice*, trans. Richard Nice [Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1977] 194.) An overt example is found in *Lamiel* when Georges rejects the first coin from d'Aubigné and tosses it out the window. For the street urchins, it is an eagerly sought after "free" gift similar to money raining down from heaven, whereas for Georges the same object is an insult due to the arrogant manner in which it is given, and thus he angrily refuses the gift. That the sentiments of the giver are an active determinant in how the gift will be judged by the recipient is reinforced when Georges, immediately thereafter, takes a second coin which is politely offered.

Montcornet shows great generosity towards his employees and the peasantry in general, but his is the generosity of a crafty manipulator. Pierre Bourdieu offers helpful insight as to what is going on in this situation:

> Gentle, hidden exploitation is the form taken by man's exploitation of man whenever overt, brutal exploitation is impossible. . . . The gift, generosity, conspicuous distribution . . . are operations of social alchemy which may be observed whenever the direct application of overt physical or economic violence is negatively sanctioned.[26]

Marc Shell, writing about an earlier period, would agree: "largesse . . . is merely a species of cupidity . . . [E]ven in acts of charity, expectation of reward is not always lacking. . . . [Shell lists authors who] agree that most medieval almsgiving seems to lack 'genuine' altruism."[27]

Montcornet's hopes of winning over the peasants through charity have a strong element of self-interest: "le général et sa femme, essayaient de la [bienfaisance]. Ils l'avaient raisonnée, ils voulaient démontrer par des résultats à ceux qui les pillaient qu'ils gagneraient davantage en s'occupant à des travaux licites" (P 321).[28] Montcornet tells Sibilet, who escapes poverty after becoming his steward, that he will be further rewarded if he serves Montcornet's interests. Since Benassis and Véronique are genuinely concerned with improving the lot of the poor, they are closer to magnanimous givers than is Montcornet, for whom the well-being of the peasants is of secondary importance. When Montcornet negotiates the release of the people caught stealing from him, his own interests, rather than a clement heart, are evident:

> Mes amis, remerciez M. le comte, c'est lui à qui vous devez la remise de vos condamnations . . . J'espère qu'à l'avenir vous vous conduirez mieux envers un homme qui se conduit si bien envers vous . . . Cette scène avait été *politiquement*

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[26] Bourdieu, *Outline* 192.

[27] Marc Shell, *Money, Language and Thought: Literary and Philosophical Economies from the Medieval to the Modern Era* (Berkeley: U of California P, 1982) 35.

[28] Square brackets included in Pléiade.

> *méditée* par le général . . . tout en montrant de la fermeté . . . user de douceur . . . on ne pouvait pas guillotiner toute une commune. (P 317, my italics)

Montcornet wants a return on his gift but does not receive it: the peasants persist in their hostility toward him rather than becoming grateful. No bonds form between Montcornet and the peasants because the gift has become contaminated by self-interest. Montcornet's gifts function as bribes in an attempt to control those under him, and that is exactly where he wants to keep the masses (that is, beneath his economic level), whereas Benassis and Véronique appear delighted and unthreatened by the economic progress of others. According to Hyde, charity is not given with the intent of raising the recipient to the level of the giver. Hyde also argues that people do not truly welcome charity and that charity is not actually a gift.[29] The cycle of give, accept, reciprocate is broken since the indigent is incapable of giving on the same scale and is left in a position of inferiority with feelings of hostility rather than gratitude. In *Les paysans*, wealth remains unevenly distributed because Montcornet is not willing to give on as grandiose a scale as is required to eliminate the perceived inequity in living conditions.

The situation can also be analysed in terms of power relationships. Whereas Benassis and Véronique see religion and money as two means of control over the peasants, as discussed previously in this chapter, any power they exercise remains firmly connected with their benevolent goal of bringing the gift of economic prosperity to others. According to Michel Foucault, resistance is always possible in a power relationship,[30] but from the beginning, Véronique encounters no resistance because her gifts precede her arrival, and any opposition to Benassis disappears once he establishes authority through his gifts. An explanation for the absence of resistance lies in the personal magnanimity of these gift-givers, and in the utopia that Balzac has created. In *Les paysans*, it is not always clear who holds power, although it is evident that Montcornet, the peasants and the bourgeoisie all desire it. The problem, in effect, is an example of what Foucault terms a discontinuity in history which brings into question something previously accepted as a fundamental "truth" or fact.[31] Foucault distinguishes between power and force; he rejects the traditional view that it is those who govern who hold power[32] and that power always moves from above to below.[33] These ideas seem to operate in *Les paysans* (as the peasants struggle to increase their power); power relations appear to be in a state of turbulence: through gift, Montcornet attempts to secure the power customarily held by the French nobility, while the peasants act to capture that same power. Montcornet resists the peasants' efforts towards exercising power, and they oppose Montcornet's assertion of his right to exercise power, but neither of them truly triumphs; the bourgeoisie (in the form of Rigou and Gaubertin) emerges as the winner in consolidating its power.

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[29] Hyde 137-38.

[30] Michel Foucault, "Ch. 7: Power and Sex," *Politics, Philosophy, Culture: Interviews and other writings 1977-84*, ed. Lawrence D. Kritzman (1988; NY: Routledge, 1990) 123.

Conclusion to Part 1: Utopia versus Reality

The societies described in *Le médecin de campagne* and *Le curé de village* are utopian: everyone works hard and is honest; peace and harmony reign as people help one another; and interpersonal conflict is quickly and easily resolved. In the creation of his utopian novels, Balzac participated in a pattern of thought particularly common among French social reformers of the period; they did not, however, see themselves as utopian theorists, but rather as scientists. To be labelled as utopian had connotations of frivolity or impracticability[34] whereas those formulating the ideas were serious and sincere in their beliefs about the possibility of implementing their plans for the creation of a new, humanized, cooperative community. The size of the community varied, depending upon the theorist, from a limited region, such as developed by Balzac's Benassis, to a community encompassing the world, like that envisioned by the Saint-Simonians. Utopians like Claude-Henri de Rouvroy, comte de Saint-Simon (1760-1825), Charles Fourier (1772-1837), Étienne Cabet (1788-1856) and Saint-Simonians such as Prosper Barthélemy Enfantin (1796-1864) generally felt that conflict could be eliminated under the right conditions and that the potential for progress was unlimited.

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[31] Foucault, "Ch. 6: On Power," *Politics, Philosophy, Culture* 100.

[32] Foucault, "Ch. 6: On Power," *Politics, Philosophy, Culture* 103 and Michel Foucault, *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice: Selected Essays and Interviews*, ed. Donald F. Bouchard, trans. Donald F. Bouchard and Sherry Simon (1977; Ithaca, NY: Cornell UP, 1981) 213.

[33] Foucault, "Ch. 7: Power and Sex," *Politics, Philosophy, Culture* 119.

[34] Keith Taylor, *The Political Ideas of the Utopian Socialists* (London: Cass, 1982) 2.

One of the prevalent beliefs of the period was that the poor were biologically inferior. According to Louis Chevalier, the various social groups in France in the first half of the nineteenth century thought of each other in racial terms; they believed that differences were determined biologically (that is, the poor were considered degenerates)[35] and claimed that morality could be determined from physical traits. The widely accepted theories of Johann Kasper Lavater (1741-1801) and of Franz Joseph Gall (1758-1828), which professed that a person's character and intelligence could be judged from the shape of his head, were not so much innovative as a reflection of what people actually believed at the time.[36] (An instance of this appears in *La rabouilleuse* and is dealt with in the next chapter: Joseph Bridau is believed by the mob to be guilty because of his physical features.) Although Balzac may have considered the poor to be inferior, he shows through such characters as Benassis and Véronique that much could be done to eradicate poverty and suffering given the right conditions.

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[35] Louis Chevalier, *Labouring Classes and Dangerous Classes in Paris during the First Half of the Nineteenth Century*, trans. Frank Jellinek (1958; London: Routledge, 1973) 384, 408, 433, 437.

[36] Chevalier 411-12.

Rather than favouring industrialization, as proposed by Robert Owen in Britain and the Saint-Simonians in France, Balzac's characters prefer an agricultural base supported by artisans--a preference which situates them closer to Fourier's doctrine. They would also appear to agree with Fourier in promoting private ownership and supporting a gradual transition to prosperity, rather than embracing communal sharing and revolution as a means of improving conditions. It is clear, however, that Balzac was presenting his own utopian vision; although he may have borrowed heavily from others, such as Fourier, his theory does not correspond precisely to any one view. Christian morality is one of Balzac's most noticeable divergences from Fourier's utopian plan; Fourier argued that Christian doctrine interfered with basic human passions, such as sexual desire, that must be satisfied rather than suppressed if happiness is to be achieved, whereas Balzac welcomed Christianity as a means of controlling those passions.

In *Le médecin de campagne* and *Le curé de village*, religion (which Marx denounced as the opiate of the masses) is venerated: the characters believe in "la nécessité d'une religion puissante qui rende le riche ami du pauvre, et commande au pauvre une entière résignation. . . . Le christianisme dit au pauvre de souffrir le riche, au riche de soulager les misères du pauvre" (MC 512-13). Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie states that the role played by the clergy in *Le médecin de campagne* is anachronistic: "j'oserai contredire Benassis et son compère Janvier--, le rôle civilisateur du clergé rural me paraît plus caractéristique du XVII^{e} siècle, voire du XVIII^{e}, que du XIX^{e}."[37] In this regard, *Les paysans* seems to come closer to an accurate portrait of the early nineteenth century. Brossette is a very devoted priest, but he recognizes the problems, if not the hopelessness, of exchange between rich and poor.

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[37] Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie, préface, *Le médecin de campagne* par Balzac (Paris: Gallimard, 1974) 22.

Le médecin de campagne was published in 1833 and *Le curé de village* in 1839; *Les paysans,* written around 1844, was completed by Balzac's widow and published in 1855. As Balzac aged and the century progressed, the author appears to have lost his early optimism: the gifts given in *Les paysans* no longer function to create ties and bring prosperity. Rather than fostering gratitude and gifts in return, what is given is seen by the recipients as what is due, with theft being condoned as a way to distribute resources in a more equitable manner. The giver is, in effect, spurned rather than honoured. The end of a way of life is signalled; Montcornet gives up the struggle and there results a fragmentation of the Aigues. This process was opposed by Balzac, but perhaps he felt it was inevitable. Earlier, in *Le curé de village,* Clousier condemns the law of succession and the peasants' hunger for land, which Grossetête also denounces:

> [Clousier:] La cause du mal gît dans le Titre des Successions du Code civil, qui ordonne le partage égal des biens. Là est le pilon dont le jeu perpétuel émiette le territoire, individualise les fortunes en leur ôtant une stabilité nécessaire, et qui, décomposant sans recomposer jamais, finira par tuer la France. . . . Si le Titre des Successions est le principe du mal, le paysan en est le moyen. (CV 817; 819)
> [Grossetête:] [L]e paysan n'a pas d'autre passion, d'autre désir, d'autre vouloir, d'autre point de mire que de mourir propriétaire (CV 819)

The difference is that, in the utopian setting of *Le curé de village*, the peasants' desire does not wreak the same havoc as occurs in *Les paysans*.

Although *Le médecin de campagne* and *Le curé de village* are considered utopian, the dominant ideology promoted in these novels remains a variant of economism. Trust and worthiness are present in the characters of Benassis and Véronique, and the gift circulates, especially in *Le médecin de campagne*, but considerable emphasis is placed on economic development as a panacea. The problem with such a position is articulated by Jean Baudrillard in his critique of "la consommation": "Tout ce qui est dépensé est en fait investi, rien n'est jamais perdu. . . . le système . . . est pris dans la fatalité de produire, d'accumuler, de rentabiliser. . . . la logique de l'appropriation, l'impossibilité de la dépense, du don, de la perte, l'inexorabilité de la loi de la valeur."[38] (La Fosseuse, on the other hand, from *Le médecin de campagne*, is discussed in the previous chapter as an embodiment of Bataille's *consumation.*) For both Bataille and Baudrillard, to accentuate the economic as an unproblematically positive force is to fall into the trap of *consommation* (where nothing is lost as reinvestment and accumulation prevail), as opposed to enjoying the liberating energy released through *consumation.*

Part 2: Gift Exchange with an Individual

In the first part of this chapter, the gift is examined as an exchange between a stranger and a group and among members of a group, with generalized exchange often being involved. In the second part, the emphasis shifts to the function of the gift in a restricted exchange situation involving individuals. In his *Outline of a Theory*, Pierre Bourdieu writes:

> The general law of exchanges means that the closer the individuals or groups are in the genealogy, the easier it is to make agreements, the more frequent they are, and the more completely they are entrusted to good faith. Conversely, as the relationship becomes more impersonal, i.e. as one moves out from the relationship between brothers to that between virtual strangers . . . so a transaction is less likely to occur at all, but it can become and increasingly does become purely "economic" in character, i.e. closer to its economic reality, and the interested calculation which is never absent even from the most generous exchange . . . can be more and more openly revealed.[39]

This indicates that a gift exchange between two strangers is unlikely, but what will be investigated now are cases where such exchange does occur. For the most part, characters not related genealogically will be studied to see if gift can function to bring them into the same "family"; some characters with blood connections, however, will also be dealt with in an attempt to reveal the circulation of the gift within the family and to determine if there are forces which act in the novels to impede the gift's movement. The discussion starts with two young girls who are taken in by strangers: Lamiel and Flore.

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[38] Jean Baudrillard, *Le miroir de la production ou l'illustration critique du matérialisme historique* (Tournai: Casterman, 1973) 124-25.
[39] Bourdieu, *Outline* 173.

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Mme Hautemare, who is childless, expresses a desire to adopt a child: "Je ferais bien d'adopter une petite fille, toute petite, nous l'élèverons dans la crainte de Dieu: ce sera véritablement *une âme que nous lui donnerons*, et, dans nos vieux jours, elle nous soignera" (L 890). At first glance, this would seem to be a proposition which will require a lot of giving by her and by her husband, since not only will the child's needs be provided for, but she will also inherit their money. André Gide, however, sees in it something much less noble:

> *le second motif donné par Mme Hautemare a peut-être, en son coeur et dans son esprit, précédé le premier, lequel, par bienséance, elle se plaît à mettre en avant. Étayer d'un noble sentiment une raison parfaitement égoïste: voici qui ne dupe pas le bon Dieu certes; mais les autres peut-être, et elle-même, je le crains bien.*[40]

Hers is not the gift of an altruistic mother, for she regards nurturing a child as an investment which will realize returns in the future. M. Hautemare initially opposes the idea, preferring to keep the money in the family. An adopted child would never be "family" in the same way as a blood relation. Mme Hautemare rejects his suggestion that they adopt his nephew's daughter: "Cette enfant ne sera pas à nous. Au bout d'un an, si on voit que nous l'aimons, le jacobin nous menacera de la retirer . . . il faudra que nous fassions des sacrifices d'argent pour qu'on ne nous enlève pas la petite fille" (L 890-91). There must be total ownership of the child/object to prevent anyone from gaining leverage to extract money.

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[40] André Gide, "En relisant *Lamiel*," *Caliban*, rpt. dans *Lamiel*, par Stendhal, préf. Jean-Jacques Hamm (15 juin 1947; Paris: Flammarion, 1993) 24-25.

Mme Hautemare demonstrates that she does not want an overly close relationship with Lamiel who is designated as a somewhat removed niece rather than a chosen daughter. The words *oncle*, *tante* and *nièce* that appear throughout the novel are continual reminders of the distance which separates Lamiel from the Hautemares. The words "dûment vaccinée" (L 891) indicate the precautions against contamination which must be taken before admitting a stranger to the household. They also further subjugate the child to the status of an animal or object. Lamiel's exclusion from the inner family surfaces again when Mme de Miossens is seeking a reader: the Hautemares worry about whether a foundling is suitable for the position, given the social distance that separates her from the nobility. This concern is quickly displaced by Mme Hautemare's fear that Lamiel will be considered a servant by the townspeople when Mme de Miossens wants Lamiel to reside with her. The incident shows the instability of Lamiel's status, which is forever shifting. Is she a stranger or a member of the family? The society of Carville, who never accepts Lamiel as part of the Hautemare family, labels the "prétendue nièce" (L 897) the "fille du diable" (L 891; 900) in whom it sees the illegimate (Lamiel) as cheating the legitimate (Hautemare's blood nephew who is defrauded of his rightful inheritance).

Lamiel herself is indifferent to pecuniary considerations and expresses a desire for "family" bonds: "elle avait rêvé une famille à aimer" (L 964). The disparity between the commercial nature of the relationship for Mme Hautemare and the lack of Lamiel's attachment to material possessions is apparent when Lamiel leaves Mme de Miossens: Lamiel is happy to escape the boring life of the wealthy, while Mme Hautemare regrets that she will no longer be showered with presents from the affluent woman. When the duchesse de Miossens makes a large gift of clothing to Lamiel, their perspectives diverge again. Lamiel puts on peasant garb, which shows a rejection of the gift and a desire to dissociate herself from the nobility and its opulence. Her sentiments contrast sharply with those of Mme Anselme (Mme de Miossens's maid) and of Mme Hautemare who would have welcomed the material goods. The duchess puts her seal on the parcels for Lamiel to prevent theft by the jealous Mme Anselme, and Mme Hautemare's envy of the gift is depicted in her demands for a share.

Rather than being happy for Lamiel, Mme Hautemare concentrates on her own self-interest. She believes she has a justified claim to a return (in the form of some of Lamiel's clothes) because she previously provided for Lamiel as a child. Her insistence that she should receive a return negates the essence of the gift in what she has given, moving it into the realm of a commercial transaction. By demanding the equivalent of a payment from Lamiel, Mme Hautemare distances herself from an exchange in which bonds could be formed. Her misinterpretation of Lamiel's sentiments is clear; she sees Lamiel as placing a high value on material objects, whereas Lamiel is searching for human bonds in the form of someone worthy of her love: "Cette demande de robe consterna la jeune fille; . . . elle n'avait donc personne à aimer; les gens qu'elle s'était figuré comme parfaits, du moins du côté du coeur, étaient aussi vils que les autres! 'Je n'ai donc personne à aimer!' " (L 964). The final blow by which Mme Hautemare obtains what she wants is when she reminds Lamiel that she is not truly a member of the family: "tu n'es pas notre nièce véritable, ajoutait-elle; mon mari et moi, nous t'avons choisie à l'hôpital" (L 964). The argument is that, as a member of the inner family circle, she would have a birthright to all she has been given, but as a stranger who has been brought in from the outside she does not have the same entitlement and thus is indebted. M. Hautemare, caught up in the same mercantile perspective as his wife (and as a result also blinded to Lamiel's true sentiments) misreads the situation as well: he tries to console Lamiel for the loss of some dresses, material items to which she is totally unattached. Lamiel, who only wants to be accepted and to belong to the family, is, in fact, isolated and driven from it because of the Hautemares' obsession with money.

Nevertheless, indications of Lamiel's continuing attachment to the Hautemares exist, despite the foregoing incidents and the narrator's claims that Sansfin succeeds in destroying any affection she has for them. For example, it is the Hautemares who receive her letter and for whom she experiences thoughts of sadness when she leaves, not Sansfin. Starting the letter with a gift of dresses to Mme Hautemare is a strategic move on her part to lessen the anger of her "aunt" to whom the material goods will be a consolation for the loss of her "niece"; gift thus functions here as a means of appeasement. The other two things she gives are a promise, which is a lie, and then a lie for the Hautemares to give others. As for the promise, she has no intention of returning in two months nor of restricting her behaviour to the prescribed Christian morality which the Hautemares have endeavoured to instill in her; she is merely telling them what they want to hear. The lie she fabricates to cover her absence is credible to their society where monetary interests predominate; she is not going to care for a sick aunt merely out of compassion--something which might have raised suspicion--but in the hope of a substantial inheritance. While at Rouen, she writes them two letters, so they will be able to confirm the story about Lamiel attending to an inheritance. Later, during her chance encounter with Clément, Lamiel inquires about the Hautemares, first referring to them as her benefactors (that is, those who have helped her financially), thereby establishing a distance from them, and then affixing the family labels of uncle and aunt. Is she keeping her options open in case she decides to return to Carville? Has some attachment, however slight, arisen because of the Hautemares' gifts to her? Or is she still clinging to the fragments of her shattered dream of family bonds?

Mme de Miossens also gives abundantly to Lamiel, but the possibility of a mother-daughter bond never arises because the relationship is too unbalanced: the duchess sees herself in the position of an elevated seignorial charity-giver worthy of homage and views Lamiel as a lowly peasant. Her son, César, although of the same generation as Lamiel, is shocked when Lamiel displays an attitude of equality by saying she does not want to appear ungrateful for all Mme de Miossens has given her; César thinks someone in Lamiel's position automatically owes respect. Through the eyes of Olympe Michaud in *Les paysans*, Niseron's granddaughter views the social structure in a similar fashion to Lamiel. The gift functions here in a way that shows the cracks that are appearing in the barriers between classes. The aristocracy still sees itself at the top of a hierarchy, worthy of respect on the basis of its intrinsic nobility, whereas both Lamiel and Niseron's granddaughter acknowledge them as they would any gift-giver.

Rather than a daughter, Lamiel is simply a source of entertainment to Mme de Miossens, serving (at least in part) as a replacement for her dead dog. When Lamiel falls ill, the duchess says she would give a hundred thousand francs to save her. This places a value on Lamiel as in the case of an object and reduces the young peasant girl to a commodity; the offer would not be restricted to a monetary sum if a motherly bond were present. In Paris, Mme Le Grand tells Lamiel on the second day of their acquaintance that she loves her like a daughter, but the veracity of this "family" sentiment becomes questionable if we examine her actions. Lamiel is even further removed from a daughter-mother relationship here than with Mme Hautemare because the latter provided her free room and board while the best the market-oriented Mme Le Grand offers is reduced rent.

If Lamiel is anyone's daughter, she is "la fille du diable". She is partially pushed into this role by the villagers: "Fille du diable! fille du diable! -- Tant mieux, répondait Lamiel, si je suis fille du diable; je ne serai jamais laide et grognon comme vous; le diable mon père saura me maintenir en gaieté" (L 904). Her critical analysis of situations distances her from the morality of the Hautemares; for instance she sees no sin in eating fat on Friday, a belief which is reconfirmed by the double standard that allows the duchess and her household to do so through a monetary contribution. Nor does Lamiel accept the Hautemares' sexual morality: "[E]lle se fût jetée dans la Seine sans balancer pour sauver son oncle ou sa bonne tante qui seraient tombés dans les flots" (L 978), but although capable of risking her life to save them, she finds both their preaching about immorality and life in general with them extremely boring. Lamiel, like Julien Sorel, is endowed with a superior intelligence and a penchant for reasoning which precludes any indoctrination or acceptance without scrutiny of the values predominant in society.

* * *

Flore Brazier, in *La rabouilleuse*, differs significantly from Lamiel in that she is strongly attached to material goods. The gifts which Rouget initially offers her are food and clothing to meet her basic needs, and these gifts function as an enticement to a peasant girl who has to work hard just to subsist. Her uncle, who immediately refuses his permission for her to live with Rouget, is no doubt thinking about the loss of Flore's labour, for he adopts a completely opposite attitude when Rouget offers him an annual payment with which he can buy land. Brazier, whose personal greed overwhelms any family attachment that he has to his niece, even accepts credit for leaving Flore: "j'ai *fè* ton bonheur en te plaçant chez ce brave et digne père des indigents" (R 390); Rouget, however, unlike Benassis, discussed earlier in this chapter, is far from being a "père des indigents".

Rouget's gifts, which are those of a scheming miser rather than a doting father, show his determination to form Flore into an assistant, capable of helping Jean-Jacques secure his fortune. For instance, she is given a gold watch and jewelry to motivate her to acquire the basic knowledge necessary for managing finances, including reading, writing and counting. From the outset, Flore is a tool and is never considered a daughter by Rouget who "purchases" her and moulds her, as he does his son, with the intention of providing for the preservation of his wealth after his death. Rouget, thinking only of his money rather than of his son's happiness, does his best to inculcate him with greed and rejects the possibility of marriage for him since this would mean the introduction to the family of a stranger who would have access to the funds. Rouget prefers the scenario of an avaricious son aided by the tool he has created in the form of Flore, rather than an unknown quantity, a daughter-in-law who might destroy through expenditure what is most precious to him and that which he wants to safeguard at all cost: his fortune.

While Lamiel is indifferent to material gifts (such as the dresses from Mme de Miossens) to the point of disdaining them, Flore remains with Rouget and Jean-Jacques to maintain their material support. Balzac's narrator comments that Rouget "avait donné à la petite paysanne le bonheur matériel qui, pour les gens de la campagne, est l'idéal du bonheur" (R 393), and Stendhal's narrator makes a similar comment concerning what constitutes happiness for the peasants at the seminary in *Le rouge et le noir*. The two notable exceptions to this generalization are, of course, Julien Sorel and Lamiel, neither of whom acquiesce to the lure of money or are subjugated by it. They thus act as a resistance to an all-encompassing bourgeois domination whose power is based solely on financial wealth, while characters such as Flore are vulnerable.

Rouget's belief that Flore feels no allegiance (and therefore must be kept materially dependent if she is to be retained) is shared by his son. Jean-Jacques denies Flore access to his wealth, not out of greed or concern for his natural heirs, but because he knows that Flore loves Max and will abandon her "brother" (Jean-Jacques) as soon as she possesses sufficient wealth. Even worse than Flore being a disinherited "daughter" (Rouget "ne laissa rien à la Rabouilleuse" [R 393]), she is an object which Rouget bequeaths: "Jean-Jacques a tout hérité de son père, même la Rabouilleuse" (R 399). Jean-Jacques verbally recognizes Flore and Max as his family: "Max, j'aurais un fils, je ne l'aimerais pas autant que je t'aime. Et Flore avait raison: à vous deux, vous êtes ma famille" (R 417). However, the love and trust which would truly bind them together are absent. It is a charade on Flore's part to extract money, and although Jean-Jacques does love Flore, he knows better than to trust her.

Agathe, who considers Flore an opportunist rather than a sister, distances her by addressing her as *mademoiselle* at the same time as she recalls family ties by referring to Jean-Jacques as *mon frère*. Flore is the outsider/servant who merits payment/gifts for what she has contributed to one of the members of the family, but she is not considered part of the family as Agathe clearly indicates:

> Je veux . . . connaître une personne à qui je suis redevable du bonheur de *mon frère*. ... Nous vous devons, *mademoiselle*, . . . beaucoup de reconnaissance pour les marques d'attachement que vous avez données à *mon frère* depuis si longtemps, et pour la manière dont vous veillez à son bonheur. . . . Aussi *mon frère*, ne sauriez-vous trop en récompenser *mademoiselle*, vous auriez dû en faire votre femme. (R 444, my italics)

It is the Bridaus who are the "héritiers naturels" (R 449), and Philippe gains support for his selfish goals by acting as an "héritier dépouillé" (R 473) when, in effect, he wants to defraud Agathe and Joseph of their share, just as Flore would; he seems an even more despicable character since he is deceiving members of his own family group. When Flore is finally incorporated into the family, it is through a marriage of convenience, a step in Philippe Bridau's plan, whereby he succeeds in securing for himself all of his Uncle Jean-Jacques's fortune.

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In *La rabouilleuse*, other examples can be found of characters (besides Flore) whose relationship to the family is marked by the flow of gifts; that is, the gift functions as a signal that indicates who is considered to be in the family and who is excluded. Rouget does not believe Agathe is his daughter (even though she is) and so gives her nothing in his will; on the other hand, he is led to believe that Max is his son (although he is not) and so pays for part of his schooling. Flore uses this recognition by Rouget of Max as one of her arguments that Jean-Jacques should take Max (her lover) in with them: to exclude Max, when he could help him, would be fratricide. Flore continues to apply pressure to get Jean-Jacques to help his "brother" by threatening to abandon Jean-Jacques if he refuses. In the past, she has declined numerous gift offers out of loyalty to Jean-Jacques, but she will now desert him if he does not open the flow of gift to Max.

Flore's definition of a brother is consistent with the patriarchal view of her society, according to which men make the laws and dominate, discussed in the previous chapter. According to her, Jean-Jacques and Max are brothers, supposedly having the same father, while Agathe Bridau is excluded as a sibling (since Rouget doubts his paternity) even though it is certain they had the same mother. Flore thus disqualifies Agathe from the category of gift-recipient, yet it is precisely because Agathe feels she is entitled to a gift that she makes the journey to see Jean-Jacques. When money is needed, it is not to friends that Agathe turns, but to her brother, even though their contact over the years has been minimal. If it were not for the blood ties, they would border on being strangers; however, these blood ties do exist, and Jean-Jacques is expected to give. According to Anthony Heath, the cliché "charity begins at home" is shown to be generally true: "most societies seem to be alike in discriminating between members of the in-group and out-group, between family members and non-family members."[41] Agathe, of course, is part of the in-group, a family member, whereas Flore is excluded.

Miserly Hochon appears to be in agreement with this sentiment when he decides to help Agathe: "par un esprit de justice sociale, il voulait . . . voir [la succession] aller aux *héritiers naturels* au lieu d'être *pillée* par des *étrangers indignes* d'estime" (R 437, my italics). (Since Hochon has the ulterior motive of ridding himself as soon as possible of the expense of feeding Agathe and Joseph, who are his wife's guests, he is also certainly acting out of self-interest.) Even Flore pretends to Agathe that she supports the latter's claims to the family fortune, but Jean-Jacques, who, like his father, does not want to relinquish anything sooner than he has to (that is, until he dies), denies that claim. Joseph, well aware of his mother's need and sensing the injustice of the situation, advises Agathe to seek legal advice. His own nobility of character is accentuated because he personally does not want any gift which his uncle would not voluntarily give.

Max and Flore hope to appease the Bridaus' quest for gifts from Jean-Jacques with trifling presents--paintings which they believe are of insignificant monetary value. Jean-Jacques agrees to the gift of the paintings, but his exclusion of the frames indicates that he, too, does not want to give anything of value. In the conversation concerning the paintings, the gift is offered ostensibly because Joseph is a family member to whom kindness should be shown, and Joseph accepts the gift since it is offered by a family member. The words *uncle* and *nephew*, which appear seven times during the scene, serve to accentuate the interplay that is underway between two people who have just met for the first time. The gift exchange they enter into only makes sense given their blood ties. Joseph's hesitation to accept payment for copies of the paintings, and then his agreement only after Flore's urging to do so since the offer is coming from his uncle, indicate that he would not be able to take the same gifts from a stranger.

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[41] Anthony Heath, *Rational Choice and Social Exchange: A Critique of Exchange Theory* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1976) 143.

Whereas the gift serves here to highlight Joseph's honourability, in the case of Philippe Bridau it functions to accentuate his treachery: his mother, aunt and brother would gladly give to him, but instead he chooses to steal from them. As Joseph says: "il est mon frère, ma bourse est la sienne; mais il devrait m'avertir" (R 328). The family is willing to share within its inner circle, but even here there are rules. The property is individually owned, rather than being in a communal pot from which all are free to draw. For Joseph, permission should be requested out of courtesy. His brother, however, protests because he regards a request as humiliating and unnecessary. Philippe justifies another of his thefts (the money for a special lottery that Mme Descoings had been accumulating for two years) saying he is only taking back what is rightfully theirs: "où est le crime? Ne vous a-t-elle pas pris vingt mille francs, elle! Ne sommes-nous pas ses créanciers? Je me suis remboursé d'autant" (R 340). (Very early the narrator states that Philippe "n'aimait plus qu'une seule personne au monde, et cette personne était le colonel Philippe" [R 303].) The notion of gift underscores the distance that separates the generous Mme Descoings from the selfish Philippe, who steals from her while she is out buying him a present (cigars). Generosity is even the motive when Mme Descoings initially takes Agathe's money to gamble: she wants to win in order to provide wealth for Agathe, and the same disinterested motivation underlies her desire to gamble again.

Agathe recognizes Philippe's dishonesty and his responsibility for Mme Descoings's death, but she is incapable of completely relinquishing her role as the mother who bears gifts. For example, when Philippe is leaving, she calls him back to give him money and must ask him for an embrace. (The embrace does not come spontaneously.) Philippe's lack of affection in this embrace discloses again that he does not care for others. The narrator states that Agathe "pria Dieu de prendre cet enfant dénaturé sous sa protection, et abdiqua sa pesante maternité" (R 343). Then, after Philippe steals one of Joseph's paintings, Agathe disowns Philippe: "Je n'ai donc plus qu'un fils" (R 350) and refuses to give money to Giroudeau on Philippe's behalf, believing it to be just another ruse. Later, she encounters him poor and sick on the street, gives her purse to him and flees; he receives the gift because she remains his mother, despite her protests to the contrary. No doubt she flees to avoid being drawn into the losing, draining, abusive relationship that they had had previously. The fact that Agathe is incapable of renouncing her synonymous roles of mother and giver (as discussed in the previous chapter) is evident in her continuing concern for Philippe:

> Après avoir épuisé l'argent de ma bourse, qui lui en donnera? . . .
> Elle ne voyait plus l'assassin de sa pauvre tante, le fléau de la famille, le voleur domestique, le joueur, le buveur, le débauché de bas étage; elle voyait un convalescent mourant de faim, un fumeur sans tabac. . . . une conspiration d'officiers au sein de l'armée . . . c'est nous, avec notre rigueur, qui l'avons poussé là (R 353-54)

The gift functions to reveal the blindness of a mother who blames herself and her other child for the misconduct of the preferred child, reproaching herself and Joseph for not having given more. Joseph sums it up well: "O mère! . . . tu seras toujours une imbécile de mère!" (R 357). Agathe's motherly love obfuscates the situation and conceals the truth which is only too evident to Joseph.

Agathe asks Philippe for a small share of the Rouget inheritance (which he has managed to finagle for himself), not to obtain a gift for herself, but to get a gift for Joseph. In his denial of the gift, Philippe asserts his desire to separate himself from his family: the comte de Brambourg wants to eradicate the name of Philippe Bridau in order to strengthen his chances of marrying into the nobility through mademoiselle Amélie de Soulanges. He reaffirms his determination to dissociate himself from the family circle when he refuses to visit his dying mother:

> Le seul service que puisse me rendre la bonne femme est de crever le plus tôt possible, car elle ferait une triste figure à mon mariage avec Mlle de Soulanges. Moins j'aurai de famille, meilleure sera ma position. Tu comprends très bien que je voudrais enterrer le nom de Bridau sous tous les monuments funéraires du Père-Lachaise! (R 531)

Philippe also reasserts his unwillingness to pass on any of the gift to another: "Ma mère veut, à propos de son dernier soupir, me tirer une carotte pour Joseph!" (R 531). Joseph makes the plea through Bixiou, a minor character in the novel and Mme Descoings's grandson. Philippe further alienates Bixiou when he denies him a personal visit to his residence because of Bixiou's inferior social status. In refusing to pay these visits, Philippe sets up an obstacle to the flow of gift in his direction: Bixiou now interferes with Philippe's plan to marry into the nobility. He warns the comte de Soulanges about Philippe, and Soulanges, as a result, refuses Philippe the gift that he has been so actively pursuing: his daughter, Amélie.

Philippe prevents the gift from circulating in his relationship with Giroudeau as well. He befriends Giroudeau as long as he benefits personally (for example, Giroudeau introduces Philippe to his nephew, Finot, who gives Philippe a job and helps put Philippe's Uncle Jean-Jacques in the grave), but he refuses to intercede on Giroudeau's behalf when the latter wants to return to the military. Philippe thereby breaks the flow of gift which plays an instrumental part in his premature death: Giroudeau (who regains a position of power) uses his influence to take vengeance upon Philippe by keeping him in Algeria where he is killed in battle. Philippe expects the men he commands to come to his rescue, but they do not; he has neglected to nurture bonds with them just as he had destroyed those between himself and Giroudeau.

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As in *La rabouilleuse*, the gift continues to function in *La cousine Bette* to define relationships within and outside the family. For example, characters express the sentiment that a moral obligation exists for cousins to help one another. Crevel asks Lisbeth whether her family has established any annuities for her and says that he will do so to embarrass her relatives, who are defaulting in their obligation to Lisbeth, a family member. He and Valérie draw nearer to Lisbeth by referring to her as their cousin and offering her gifts, not out of love for her, but for the assistance she can provide them. To Valérie, she is "*sa* cousine Bette" (CB 144) as she is for Crevel (CB 164). The possessive, used by the narrator and italicized, seems to draw attention to the cordial rapport they see themselves as establishing with Lisbeth. Valérie may speak of "deux soeurs" (CB 145) or a "tante honnête" (CB 150), but even "cousins" is perhaps a closer relationship than she would prefer: "Comme elle pue la fourmi! . . . je ne l'embrasserai pas souvent, ma cousine! Cependant, prenons garde, il faut la ménager, elle me sera bien utile, elle me fera faire fortune" (CB 150).

No bonds form between Crevel and Lisbeth since their exchanges remain on a strictly commercial level, despite Crevel's conferring of the title of cousin; bonds from gifts do form, however, between Valérie and Lisbeth. When the young woman offers her furniture to Lisbeth, it is with the aim of buying her assistance, and Lisbeth is suitably impressed by the present: "elle n'osait croire à un pareil cadeau. -- Vous faites plus pour moi dans un moment que mes parents riches en trente ans!" (CB 131). Although this initial gift helps to win Lisbeth, the firm cementing of bonds between the two women results from the reciprocal aid they provide one another. Valérie's goal may be to accumulate wealth, but Lisbeth is more interested in vengeance than material possessions, and Valérie's seductive beauty is the means by which she can obtain her goal. It seems as though the tighter the ties binding Lisbeth to Valérie become, the more she hates her blood relations; it is Valérie who takes on the role of a family for her.

Lisbeth's offers of gifts appear very considerate and generous to her relatives, yet they really form part of her scheme to avenge; she is driven by hate and vengeance. She ostensibly wants to marry Hector Hulot's brother to secure his pension, when he dies, as a source of funding in order to support the family. On the surface, it is an extremely kindhearted action, and others see her as the "bon ange de la famille" (CB 171); but what she really seeks is a position of power and domination, especially over Adeline: "Adeline, je te verrai dans la boue et plus bas que moi!" (CB 147). "Elle jouissait par avance du bonheur de régner sur la famille qui l'avait si longtemps méprisée" (CB 313). Note that it is *the* family, not *her* family; Lisbeth dissociates herself from them when she expresses her true sentiments, whereas, when she cleverly manoeuvres to deceive them, she includes herself in the inner family circle to which she protests her loyalty: "Je suis de *ma famille* avant tout" (CB 291, my italics). Lisbeth's masquerade as a devoted, giving family member is very evident when Hector Hulot goes into hiding. The latter, who has clearly become a degenerate, willingly seeks her gifts ("Donne, Lisbeth! . . . Donne!" [CB 392]), and Lisbeth, who has always protested that she has Adeline's interests at heart, readily and repeatedly gives Hector money. Rather than a loving gift aimed at helping him, Lisbeth's financial assistance to Hector becomes a means of obtaining vengeance. Adeline's misery is prolonged since the money Lisbeth gives prevents Adeline from finding Hector and reuniting the family. At the same time as Lisbeth is blocking the family's efforts to be together, she craftily feigns her generosity and her sympathy for Adeline: "Ah! je donnerais bien mes trois mille six cents francs de rente pour voir le baron ici! . . . Mais, ma bonne Adeline, ne conçois pas de pareilles joies par avance!"(CB 390). It is ironic that the family she has tried so energetically to destroy mourns her death, "la regrettant comme l'ange de la famille" (CB 448).

Raised in the same dwelling, Lisbeth and Adeline were more like sisters than cousins, and some justification can be made for Lisbeth's resentment of Adeline, the preferred child who was given preferential treatment because of her beauty. Lisbeth's overtly hostile attack upon Adeline during their childhood underlines her excessively jealous nature just as her covert hostility does in adulthood. Studies indicate that a child is happier when s/he and another child receive nothing than in a situation in which they each receive a gift, but the other child is deemed to have received more.[42] This principle applies to Lisbeth; she has benefited from the gifts Adeline has given her yet would be more satisfied if Adeline had not been raised out of the peasantry through marriage, even though she would not have received as much herself. Lisbeth remains bitter about her subordinate place on the periphery of the family: "Adeline et moi, nous sommes du même sang, nos pères étaient frères, elle est dans un hôtel, et je suis dans une mansarde" (CB 82). Although equal to Adeline in status by birth, Lisbeth has been outdistanced socially by her cousin. Gifts have been given to Lisbeth because she is a member of the family, but the gifts remain in a category insufficient to raise Lisbeth to the same level as the others--that is, to draw her into the inner family circle--and she experiences deep resentment rather than gratitude: "Avec une parente pauvre, on agit comme avec les rats à qui l'on présente un morceau de lard" (CB 150). The gifts seem an irritant which arouse her animosity since they remind her of her position of inferiority.

Balzac uses the gift of clothes on at least three separate occasions in *La cousine Bette* in developing Lisbeth as a character. First, as a child, Adeline receives clothes as gifts which the jealous Lisbeth wants to destroy since they are prettier than those given to her. Secondly, there are beautiful new clothes which Adeline gives to Lisbeth who ruins them with her modifications and thus, in effect, destroys the gift. When she first appears in the novel, it is her clothes which set her apart from the rest of the family ("un étranger aurait hésité à saluer la cousine Bette comme une parente de la maison" [CB 57]), which is perhaps a grudging attempt to be an embarrassment to the family in spite of their gifts. (Only during a brief period, when she is hopeful of a marriage which would elevate her in society, does she dress appropriately.) The third gift of clothes comes from Valérie, which Lisbeth welcomes without making any detrimental alterations. It would appear that, for a gift system to work, exchanges must occur between equals.[43] Lisbeth regards Valérie as a daughter rather than feeling subordinate to her as she does to Adeline: "Elle adorait d'ailleurs Valérie, elle en avait fait sa fille, son amie, son amour" (CB 200).

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[42] Fiske 185.

Balzac portrays Lisbeth as excessively jealous and vindictive, but she is not miserly and appears as a generous giver to Steinbock with whom she has a mother-son relationship: "La vieille fille déployait la tendresse d'une brutale, mais réelle maternité. Le jeune homme subissait comme un fils respectueux la tyrannie d'une mère" (CB 108). "[Lisbeth] jouissait de le voir ne manquant de rien, elle eût donné sa vie pour lui" (CB 117). Still, Lisbeth's image as the mother/giver appears to be tarnished since, according to Adeline, women such as Lisbeth are egoistic and do not know what it is to love. Lisbeth's attitude toward Steinbock is closer to that of a master to a pet as she herself explains: "je n'ai ni chat, ni serin, ni chien, ni perroquet; il faut qu'une vieille bique comme moi ait quelque petite chose à aimer, à tracasser; eh bien... je me donne un Polonais" (CB 92). The comparison of Steinbock to a pet is also used by the narrator: "elle avait mis dans son sac des fruits et des sucreries pour son amoureux, et elle venait les lui donner, absolument comme une vieille fille rapporte une friandise à son chien" (CB 107).

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[43] Here, the novel provides an example which supports Malinowski's observation about the Kula exchange that gifts are typically given to equals.

Lisbeth appears incapable of relinquishing her ownership; that is, of *giving* her "son" or of rejoicing in any happiness that he might find with Hortense. For Lisbeth, it is tantamount to theft. (Hulot and the narrator also describe Hortense's interest in Steinbock in terms of a theft.) In an effort to resist the forfeiture of her possession, she does everything from proposing marriage, to imprisoning Steinbock, to lying. Marriage would constitute an incestuous relation between the "mother" and "son", and it is more in a desperate attempt to prevent the loss of Steinbock to Hortense that Lisbeth, believing she sees passion for herself in his eyes, makes the proposal. She may refer to him as her sweetheart, but their relationship is never that of lovers. Despite her amorous attraction to him, she would prefer that their undefined ties continue and protests a mother's love because of the impossibility of another relationship: "je lui aurais donné tout mon sang... -- Vous l'aimez donc? -- Comme s'il était mon enfant!"(CB 146); "je mourrai . . . si je perds cet enfant à qui je croyais toujours servir de mère, avec qui je comptais vivre toute ma vie" (CB 148).

Lisbeth, harshly accusing Steinbock of ingratitude as she enumerates all she has done for him, is not a true giver of gifts. Her insistence on obtaining compensation for what she has given moves her out of gift and into the negotiations of a commercial transaction. As she imposes a separation between herself and her family because of her relegation to an inferior social level, she also eliminates any possibility of a continuing relationship with Steinbock, whom her possessive nature will not allow her to share.

* * *

Having considered the role of the gift in determining the relationships of two "daughters" (Lamiel and Flore) and a cousin (Lisbeth), I will now look at the function of the gift with respect to four "sons": Grégoire Gérard, Eugène de Rastignac, Lucien Chardon de Rubempré and Julien Sorel.

In *Le curé de village*, Grégoire Gérard, deeply grateful to Grossetête for his past gifts, grants him the position of a "father" to whom he turns for advice: "je me regarde comme votre enfant et ne ferai jamais de démarches importantes sans vous les soumettre, car votre expérience égale votre bonté" (CV 801). Grossetête is also a father figure to whom Véronique turns for advice and help. It is important to keep in mind that *Le curé de village* deals with a utopia in which relationships, such as this one between "father" and "son", are idealized. I am now going to study three other novels, *Le père Goriot, Splendeurs et misères des courtisanes* and *Le rouge et le noir*, to examine the effectiveness of gift exchange in establishing "father-son" relationships between a gift-bearing male and a younger talented man. I shall be attempting to see if bonds form, and if they do, to what extent and to what degree of durability they develop.

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In *Le père Goriot*, Vautrin uses gifts to entice Rastignac into a relationship which is more like a partnership than a "father-son" bonding. Vautrin proposes to supply Rastignac with a richly endowed bride and in return expects a share of the fortune. The situation is different from that in *Splendeurs et misères des courtisanes* in which Vautrin-Herrera gives everything to Lucien and finds no sacrifice too great.

Lucien is willing to enter into a pact with the false priest Herrera, but Rastignac senses the danger in any liaison with him and prefers to keep his distance. When he quickly repays the tip Vautrin has given on his behalf, the latter asks: "On dirait que vous avez peur de me devoir quelque chose?" (PG 133) to which Rastignac replies: "Mais... oui" (PG 133). Balzac's universe seems to embody similar ideas to those expounded by Marcel Mauss in his theory of the gift; that is, the recipient remains obliged to the giver until he returns the gift with a surplus besides, and social bonds become established between gift-exchange participants. Rastignac loses his money gambling but continues to refuse Vautrin's offer of funds; he thus rejects any alliance with a man whose integrity is doubtful: "il m'est impossible de vous avoir des obligations" (PG 185). Vautrin, extremely perspicacious, understands that Rastignac is not ready to form a pact: "Je ne veux pas que ce soit la passion, le désespoir, mais la raison qui vous détermine à venir à moi" (PG 184). In effect, he retracts his money from the realm of gift (and symbol) by demanding interest which transforms the gift into a capitalist loan without any friendship bonds: "L'intérêt est assez fort pour vous ôter tout scrupule; vous pouvez m'appeler juif, et vous regarder comme quitte de toute reconnaissance" (PG 185). Rastignac's haste to settle the debt, after winning at gambling, is evidence of his fear of owing anything to Vautrin. His principles weaken, however, when he believes his liaison with Delphine is faltering, and he begins to count on a relationship with Victorine, even going so far as to enter into amorous exchanges with her. Nevertheless, he rejects any complicity in the crime by which he would obtain Victorine Taillefer and her fortune since that would link him with her brother's assassin.

When Rastignac and Herrera (alias Vautrin) appear in *Splendeurs et misères des courtisanes*, Herrera reminds him of how he lacked the strength to accept the gift which was offered ("vous à qui le coeur a failli pour saisir les millions du papa Taillefer quand le plus fort de l'ouvrage était fait" [SM 55]) and informs him that Lucien is now the new gift-recipient. If Lucien and Rastignac are to be equated as "brothers", and Herrera is to be Lucien's "father", then Rastignac would be Herrera's "son". Lucien, however, is to be the favoured, coddled "son", and Rastignac is to be treated with severity if he interferes with Herrera's plans or refuses his aid: "si vous ne vous comportez pas avec Lucien comme avec un frère que vous aimeriez, vous êtes dans nos mains sans que nous soyons dans les vôtres. . . . Choisissez entre la vie ou la mort" (SM 434). Rastignac befriends Lucien out of fear (that is, he feels he has no alternative), and Herrera promises to reward him for his fidelity. According to George Homans, we become closer to those with whom we associate,[44] and this would appear to be the case, in the novel, with Rastignac and Lucien. Bonds appear to have formed between Rastignac and Lucien: Rastignac attends Lucien's funeral and receives a gift in his testament. Even though Rastignac's attendance at the burial has nothing to do with Herrera's previous threats, the false priest still promises to reward him for the fidelity he thus shows to Lucien's memory.

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In the relationship between Herrera and Lucien, the gift reveals the double identity of Herrera as father and devil; Herrera as the gift-bearing Satan is present in "ce pacte d'homme à démon" (IP 703) that he offers Lucien. Herrera outlines all the great achievements he has planned for Lucien and seems to equate himself with Satan in "Dieu ou moi (ce qui vaut mieux) aidant" (SM 482). The young man is another body, a substitute outer shell, a creation through which the false priest hopes to take revenge upon society:

> ce personnage ignoble et grand, obscur et célèbre, dévoré surtout d'une fièvre de vie, revivait dans le corps élégant de Lucien dont l'âme était devenue la sienne. Il se faisait représenter dans la vie sociale par ce poète, auquel il donnait sa consistance et sa volonté de fer. Pour lui, Lucien était plus qu'un fils, plus qu'une femme aimée, plus qu'une famille, plus que sa vie, il était sa vengeance (SM 502)

Herrera as a giver directs his gifts to himself; he and Lucien become merged into one being through their pact: "Pour lui, Lucien était son âme visible" (SM 813). He has no qualms about sacrificing anything or anyone: "Aucun sacrifice ne coûtait d'ailleurs à cet homme étrange, dès qu'il s'agissait de son second lui-même"

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[44] Homans's ideas are discussed by Collins 340-43.

(SM 502). Squandering the money entrusted to him by other criminals on luxuries for Lucien shows the great personal risks he is willing to undertake in order to give. As he explains to Camusot: "c'est une âme si jeune, si fraîche, une beauté si magnifique, un enfant, un poète... On éprouve irrésistiblement le besoin de se sacrifier à lui, de satisfaire ses moindres désirs" (SM 764). Herrera stresses to Esther that what he does for her is really done for Lucien and that she thus owes him nothing. Esther is merely a tool whose personal sentiments do not count, and he consciously erects barriers to any bonds which might form because of his gifts to the young woman. Whereas bonds with Lucien, the "son", are cultivated through gift-giving, Esther remains a non-entity, and the possibility of her becoming a "daughter" to Herrera is not considered.

In their first encounter in *Illusions perdues*, Herrera refers to Lucien as "mon fils" and "enfant" while Lucien addresses him as "mon père" (IP 706, 708). While such titles are appropriately used by a priest and another in conversation, they also set up the "father-son" relationship which continues between the two. As Herrera states: "Je veux aimer ma créature, la façonner, la pétrir à mon usage, afin de l'aimer comme un père aime son enfant" (IP 708). This initial promise of gift functions as an enticement to Lucien to enter into a pact with the false priest:[45] "Donnez-vous à un homme de Dieu comme on se donne au diable" (SM 504). "Mon père, je suis à vous, dit Lucien ébloui de ce flot d'or" (IP 709). Herrera makes perfectly clear that he is the authority figure in the gift-giving relationship, and Lucien responds by subordinating himself to Herrera for the gift: "j'ai vendu ma vie. Je ne m'appartiens plus" (IP 724).

In a usual parent-son relationship, the parent gives with the idea that one day the child will achieve independence, but this element is absent in the ties between Herrera and Lucien; the young man is kept forever dependent and never allowed to become an adult. Although Herrera may call him a man (SM 482), he typically refers to him as a child: "le petit . . . ce cher enfant" (SM 814); "Pauvre! pauvre petit! pauvre petit!" (SM 899). Herrera accepts the blame for Lucien's incarceration and knows he must get help to him in prison because "cet enfant" (SM 717) is incapable of surviving the ordeal on his own. Although Herrera is a treacherous murderer, he shows great devotion towards Lucien; for example, he faints at Lucien's interment and asks for some locks of hair as a remembrance of the one to whom he has given so greatly.

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[45] D'Arthez earlier predicts it to Ève and, given Lucien's character, it does not come as a surprise.

Herrera's gifts and devotion are construed by society in terms of a family relationship ("tous croyaient que Lucien était l'enfant naturel de ce prêtre" [SM 474]) because generous giving to a stranger would be nonsensical; the sharing of material wealth in society is generally restricted to the confines of the inner group (that is, the family). During his interrogation, Herrera uses the same justification ("c'est mon fils!" [SM 749]) to explain to Camusot why he continues to demonstrate such an interest in Lucien. Despite Herrera's gifts, Camusot is uncertain if the young man actually is Herrera's son, and his suspicions are confirmed when he questions Lucien. Whereas Herrera regards him as a son, Lucien shows repugnance at the idea ("Lui! mon père! . . . Un Jacques Collin mon père!... Oh! ma pauvre mère... Et il fondit en larmes " [SM 772-73]). He quickly regrets his words and prior to killing himself attempts to remedy the situation by making multiple references to their "father-son" attachment.

In his farewell letter to Herrera, Lucien writes: "votre fils spirituel, celui que vous aviez adopté" (SM 789), and he bequeaths him the amount of money entrusted to Herrera by other convicts but spent on Lucien because of his "paternelle tendresse" (SM 790). Lucien also makes a written retraction of what he had previously said about Herrera: he now refers to him as his "père spirituel" (SM 790). Herrera's gifts do not completely win over Lucien, as his spontaneous initial reaction of horror would indicate, yet certain bonds have formed which would explain Lucien's attempt to alleviate the damage he has caused Herrera.

The opening paragraph of the letter shows Lucien's regret in betraying his generous benefactor who, Lucien believes in spite of his betrayal, would still help him if he could: "Mon cher abbé, je n'ai reçu que des bienfaits de vous, et je vous ai trahi. Cette ingratitude involontaire me tue, et, quand vous lirez ces lignes, je n'existerai plus; vous ne serez plus là pour me sauver" (SM 789). Indeed, Herrera seems determined to keep giving to Lucien: he will take vengeance against those whom he holds responsible for Lucien's demise and will help those who would preserve his memory. He refers to his own life as a "pauvre présent" (SM 924), which he dedicates to these ends. Herrera also wants to be buried with Lucien; that is, he wants to be reunited with his "son" when he dies.

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Variations on the theme of a fatherly giver can also be seen in at least four of the older men who give to Julien Sorel in *Le rouge et le noir*: an old army surgeon, dead before the novel starts; two Jansenist priests, Chélan and Pirard; and a member of the nobility, the marquis de La Mole. The gifts are given mainly to develop the young man whom they see as having great potential.

The old surgeon bequeaths Julien his books and cross after instilling him with a love of the Napoleonic era where promotion in society was possible for those with individual merit, even if they were not of noble birth (that is, those in Julien's situation). Julien shows his attachment to the gift when old Sorel knocks his favourite book into the stream and beats him: "Il avait les larmes aux yeux, moins à cause de la douleur physique que pour la perte de son livre qu'il adorait" (RN 232). He further shows his esteem in safeguarding his gift with Fouqué before going to live with the Rênals. M. de Rênal describes Julien as the Benjamin of the old republican surgeon, but the narrator does not detail Julien's personal sentiments towards him.

Chélan, Julien's next "father", teaches him Latin and theology, watches over him, and gives him another opportunity after learning of his seduction of Mme de Rênal. It is here that Julien as the gift-recipient begins to pass from one gift-giver to another. Pirard gives Julien the scholarship to attend the seminary because it is requested by Chélan: "La bourse entière que vous sollicitez, vous dirais-je, est la chose du monde la plus difficile à obtenir. Mais l'abbé Chélan a mérité bien peu, par cinquante-six ans de travaux apostoliques, s'il ne peut disposer d'une bourse au séminaire" (RN 381). Similarly, the marquis de La Mole makes Julien his secretary, as Pirard requests. The gift is offered to Julien as a means of indirectly repaying the dedication and generosity of a third party. It is meant as a reward to Pirard, not to Julien, and no desire is expressed by the giver to benefit from the gift. The lack of propensity to gain personally is shown more clearly in the marquis de La Mole's anonymous gift of money to Julien at the seminary, which is an indirect gift to Pirard: neither Julien nor Pirard are aware of its source.

Pirard is the one whom Julien most openly recognizes as "father". He obtains a position for Julien with the marquis de La Mole and offers to make him his vicar (who will receive half his revenue), if Julien dislikes life at the marquis's residence. He cushions the acceptance of the gift by presenting it as the payment of a debt to Julien who had previously offered him his savings: "Je vous dois cela et plus encore, ajouta-t-il en interrompant les remercîments [sic] de Julien, pour l'offre singulière que vous m'avez faite à Besançon. Si au lieu de cinq cent vingt francs, je n'avais rien eu, vous m'eussiez sauvé" (RN 444). Julien is deeply moved and discerns a "father" in Pirard at this point: "J'ai été haï de mon père depuis le berceau; c'était un de mes grands malheurs; mais je ne me plaindrai plus du hasard, j'ai retrouvé un père en vous, monsieur" (RN 444). Pirard continues to befriend

Julien, even when Mathilde is pregnant, and recommends that de La Mole allow the marriage.

While Julien regards Pirard as a "father", he considers Chélan as a helpful stepping stone. Although he shows Chélan kindness, building him bookshelves when he relocates and sending him money for anonymous alms distribution, he does not see Chélan as a "father". Julien wonders if he should take offence when Chélan makes arrangements for him and orders him to leave Verrières immediately: "il examinait si son honneur devait s'estimer offensé des soins que M. Chélan, qui après tout n'était pas *son père,* avait pris pour lui" (RN 364, my italics). In prison, he addresses Chélan as "mon père" and is addressed as "mon enfant" (RN 651-52), which again are titles used in conversation with a priest, albeit here an emotional one, rather than a "father-son" exchange.

A fourth "father", the marquis de La Mole, is very generous towards Julien; for example, he obtains a cross for him which his own son has desired for eighteen months but has not yet received. He comes to appreciate Julien during a period of illness when the two spend a lot of time alone together: "[P]ourquoi ai-je tant de honte de m'attacher à ce petit abbé? il est original. Je le traite comme un fils; eh bien! où est l'inconvénient? Cette fantaisie, si elle dure, me coûtera un diamant de cinq cents louis dans mon testament" (RN 478). This demonstrates once again (as was seen with Rastignac and Lucien) that attachments form between people who associate with one another. Through continued close contact with the marquis, Julien moves progressively away from the role of a peasant stranger to that of a nobly born "son".

The many gifts from the marquis de La Mole to his talented, competent secretary, "un autre lui-même" (RN 522), do not compare to those made to his prospective son-in-law. The latter are given by the marquis in an eager attempt to raise Julien out of the peasantry into the nobility. He has now adopted a different viewpoint from that expressed formerly when he gave Julien the cross and emphatically stated that he did not want to change Julien's social status. Mathilde is particularly grateful for Julien's title; the money given is of secondary importance. The marquis de La Mole anticipated that his daughter would be a duchess through marriage to Croisenois, and he now contemplates ways to elevate Julien into the nobility. Julien expresses a certain degree of regret for his relationship with the marquis's daughter; he refers to the marquis as a benefactor, rather than as his father, and thus distances himself from the gift-giver.

Legitimate children in the novel present an obstruction to the formation of enduring "father-child" ties between two strangers. The marquis de La Mole gives abundantly to Julien, including the cross which Julien receives before Norbert, his legitimate son, but any attachment between the two seems irremediably ruptured when Julien becomes an obstacle to the marquis's plans for his daughter. At this point, the gifts given to Julien by the marquis are really targeted at improving his daughter's situation. When the marquis receives Mme de Rênal's letter, he denounces Julien, and the "son" becomes a mere opportunist who receives no support or visits in prison from the former "father" for whom any family relationship has ceased to exist.

The same interference by legitimate offspring can be seen in *Le père Goriot* where Goriot's adoption of Rastignac as a son is conditional: he can only continue in that role as long as he brings no harm to Delphine, the legitimate daughter. Ties with Delphine remain irrevocable, while those established through the gift remain constantly under threat of dissolution. The question of legitimacy, which was fiercely debated during the period, will be dealt with in the next chapter.

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As portrayed in *La rabouilleuse* and *La cousine Bette*, early nineteenth-century French society considered it normal that family members give to one another. Herrera, in *Splendeurs et misères des courtisanes*, recognizes society's restrictions on giving when he tells Lucien to persuade his sister (Ève) to say that she is the source of his money while it is really Herrera who has successfully extracted it from Nucingen by using Esther. Likewise, the marquis de La Mole instructs Julien to say that the money given by him is a gift from his natural father: society does not question a gift from a family member. Indeed, at times it seems that one must be a member of the same family for gifts to be possible. David Séchard, for instance, feels he will be able to help Lucien more fully as Ève's husband, which will make him a "brother" to Lucien through marriage. He uses his sincere desire to help Lucien as leverage to get Ève to accept his proposal: "je voudrais être le frère de Lucien. Vous seule pouvez me donner ce titre, qui lui permettrait de tout accepter de moi . . . La bourse d'un frère ne sera-t-elle pas comme la sienne?" (IP 214). Gifts from a stranger are limited, whereas those from a family member appear without restriction. Eugénie Grandet refers to Charles as her brother to encourage him to accept her gift. Likewise, when Anastasie hesitates to accept Rastignac's money, Goriot enables the gift-giving by saying that the gift is from a brother. Gift can flow freely only within the confines of the limited and well-defined family group.

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On the one hand, the gift functions to incorporate individuals into a family relationship; on the other hand, the lack of gifts from a family member tends to partially dissolve the family unit. Grandet, in *Eugénie Grandet*, Séchard, in *Illusions perdues*, and Sorel, in *Le rouge et le noir*, provide examples of this in the novels of the period. Grandet gives Eugénie gold coins, but she is not at liberty to give them to Charles: they are merely a transfer of money from one pot to another, and not truly a gift according to Hyde's definition of a gift as something which one is free to give to another.[46] Grandet's attachment to money dehumanizes and prevents him from developing a loving relationship; Eugénie's obedience to and later care of her father comes from a sense of duty rather than love. Eugénie and her mother readily accept Charles's offer of gifts which take on symbolic meaning for them and create ties between the giver and receiver, but Grandet, who brings everything into the realm of the economic, seems incapable of entering such a relationship. Rather than accepting the gift in the spirit of a gift, which would form bonds between himself and his nephew to whom he could be a father, Grandet turns it into a commercial transaction: he pays for Charles's gold buttons by covering the cost of his trip.

Séchard, like Grandet, puts money ahead of anything else:

> la ruse d'une avarice qui tuait tout en lui, même la paternité . . . pour le bonhomme, il n'y avait ni fils ni père, en affaires. S'il avait d'abord vu dans David son unique enfant, plus tard il y vit un acquéreur naturel de qui les intérêts étaient opposés aux siens: il voulait vendre cher, David devait acheter à bon marché; son fils devenait donc un ennemi à vaincre. (IP 127-28)

He succeeds in extorting an elevated price for the printing business which he later refers to as to a gift: "la belle imprimerie que je t'ai *donnée*"(IP 227). The author's italics serve as a reinforced reminder of Séchard's distortion of the situation. He resists any gift to his son, even going so far as to try to prevent David from obtaining what is legally his; for example, he says to Petit-Claud: "Je vous paye, si vous me donnez les moyens de déshériter mon fils sans nuire à mon petit-fils et à ma bru!" (IP 617). When he thinks David may have discovered a profitable method of fabricating paper, Séchard wants to incorporate himself and David into a father-son gift-giving relationship to gain a share of the earnings. However, prior to this David makes an accurate assessment of his father ("Tu sais s'il s'inquiète de moi? le bonhomme vit pour lui" [IP 224]) and will not allow himself to be duped. Séchard's agreement quickly moves them outside the family unit and into the commercial sphere once again:

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[46] Hyde xiv.

> -- . . . vous m'avez prouvé qu'il n'y avait pas de père dans les affaires...
> -- . . . tu te défies de celui qui t'a donné la vie.
> -- Non, mais de celui qui m'a ôté les moyens de vivre.
> -- Chacun pour soi, tu as raison! (IP 627)

Grandet and Séchard are not aware of their miserly ways: Grandet sees himself as "très généreux" (EG 1047), and "[Séchard] ne croyait pas avoir dépouillé David" (IP 626). For both Grandet and Séchard, the preservation of their wealth is more important than the happiness and well-being of their children. Grandet teaches Eugénie how to manage his wealth, and Séchard instructs Kolb with the intention of leaving someone to care for his possessions. This tendency is typical of Balzac's miserly characters and has already been seen in Rouget's introduction of Flore into the household--but not into the family--and Jean-Jacques's upbringing, which also aimed to safeguard his fortune.

When Séchard refuses to help David, some characters believe that he is not fulfilling his role as a father who, by their definition, should be a giver and a provider: "Un drôle de père . . . Il fait . . . tout vendre chez son fils, et il a pour plus de deux cent mille francs de bien" (IP 554-55). Others take the opposite view, seeing Séchard as protecting his money from dissipation by someone who is outside the family unit. David might recognize Lucien as a brother because of his marriage to Ève, but society excludes Lucien from the Séchard family unit: David's help is regarded as a weakness, rather than as a commendable humanitarian action or as a duty to a family member.

Another character who fails in his role as a father is old Sorel. Whereas Eugénie and David make excuses for their fathers and care for them, Julien feels great repulsion for his father and experiences remorse as a result. He likes the idea that he is possibly the natural son of a noble because his hatred for Sorel would not be so egregious. Julien does not fit into the Sorel family, which is characterized by brute force and greed, and dissociates himself from it as much as possible. Old Sorel appears very little in the novel, but when he does, his interests centre around money, not on Julien's well-being. At the start of the novel, Julien is depicted by Sorel as a worthless drain on resources whom he is happy to sell to Rênal. In prison, Julien contemplates forbidding any visits to avoid Sorel's presence, but, as Fouqué explains to him, such an order would not be applied to a father who has certain inviolable rights in society. When Sorel finally shows up, it is not to comfort his son, who wisely offers him a gift of money to halt his verbal abuse. Julien correctly determines that Sorel's financial gain more than compensates him for the shame brought to the family. Given a choice between the money and saving his son, Sorel would take the money.

Conclusion

Julien feels repulsion towards old Sorel and, at the same time, a sense of guilt which motivates him to give money to his father. The obligation to repay is even more evident in Julien's relationship with the marquis de La Mole; he expresses regret for any hurt that he may have brought the marquis through Mathilde. Lucien has similar feelings regarding Herrera. Both young men are in a position of inferiority which denies them the opportunity of reciprocating in the gift exchange, a situation that contrasts sharply with Malinowski's description of the Kula in which bonds form when gifts are exchanged between relatively equal partners.

The only possibility for bonds to endure is if the young man can pass from the outside to be incorporated within the family of the gift-bearing stranger. Malinowski writes of the rarity of the pure or free gift with no ensuing social obligation,[47] such as the gift which is given by a man to his wife or by a parent to his child, for example, when a father gives his knowledge of magic to his son.[48] Malinowski's theory of the pure gift is similar to Jacques Derrida's notion of the unconditional gift.[49] From Derrida's perspective, Mauss "parle de tout sauf du don . . . de tout ce qui . . . pousse au don *et* à annuler le don,"[50] because the obligation to repay, which Mauss affirms so emphatically, negates the possibility of gift for Derrida. Once again the family is cited as the sanctuary for the gift: "Peut-il y avoir du don *en famille*? Mais a-t-on jamais pensé le don *sans famille*?"[51]

When the marquis de La Mole sends money anonymously to Julien at the seminary, he shows the ability to give without expecting anything in return. This giving meets the requirements of a pure gift or an unconditional gift. The "father-son" relationship disintegrates completely only when the marquis feels Julien is unworthy of trust because of Mme de Rênal's letter. As discussed previously, the stability of any such relationship is constantly threatened with dissolution by legitimate "blood" offspring.

While Herrera has no legitimate children to sway his loyalty from Lucien, interference with the firm establishment of "father-son" ties comes from society. Herrera's background and social status make him unsuitable as a "father" in Lucien's eyes, and gift is unable to close the gap. A close look at Vautrin-Herrera indicates an evolution in his gift-giving; he starts with a strong expectation of personal gain but ends with an exclusive concentration on Lucien's welfare. That Herrera is prepared to give himself unconditionally for Lucien's benefit shows how the gift-giver becomes attached to the recipient. From initially being an interchangeable commodity with Rastignac through which Vautrin-Herrera would take revenge upon society, Lucien, the gift-recipient, emerges as a unique, irreplaceable being--a "son".

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[47] Malinowski 177.

[48] The example is complicated because, in the society described, the father is considered a stranger and thus is without obligation. It is the maternal uncle who is socially obligated to the boy; yet he would exact payment for secrets about magic and would withhold land for his own children until his death when it would rightfully pass to his nephew, the exception being if the nephew paid for it beforehand.

[49] Jacques Derrida, *Donner le temps. 1. La fausse monnaie* (Paris: Galilée, 1991) 31.

[50] Derrida 39.

[51] Derrida 31.

Economic conditions prevent Lamiel and Flore from forming "family" bonds or attachments like those between Herrera and Lucien and between de La Mole and Julien. It is primarily Mme Hautemare's concern for economic gain and security that precludes any firm bonding between herself and Lamiel. In the case of *La rabouilleuse*, it is once again economic interest which interferes with establishing ties, since it is for economic reasons that Rouget "buys" Flore, and it is her desire for economic gain that entices Flore to take up residence with him and to stay with Jean-Jacques after Rouget's death. Although on the surface Jean-Jacques appears to love Flore as a brother would a sister, this love is questionable because Jean-Jacques, formed and indoctrinated by his miserly father, has been contaminated by economic interests and lacks the trust necessary for firm bonding. When Philippe threatens to replace Flore with a more cooperative young woman from Paris, she sees herself as the expendable item she is; no "family" bonds exist to make her irreplaceable to Jean-Jacques as Lucien becomes to Herrera.

In *La cousine Bette* and *La rabouilleuse*, individual interests encroach on traditional family ties. Lisbeth seeks to destroy her family for personal vengeance, while pretending to help, and becomes an increasingly hostile force attacking from inside the family group. Philippe ceases to be a true brother and a son, dissociating himself from his kin, and refusing any request for gift in his attempt to marry into the nobility. Similarly Grandet, Séchard and Sorel are not real fathers because of their unwillingness to give.

Although the gift is capable of causing relationships to develop which bring characters in a novel into the same "family" group, problems arise with the stability of these relationships. Whereas the ties of those related on a genealogical basis appear relatively permanent, those brought together through the gift are less secure. The gift achieves only a partial and qualified success in establishing relationships: the ties formed are threatened from the economic sphere and the legitimate biological group. The gift, nevertheless, remains a significant force in establishing relationships. In the next chapter, the gift in the form of the sacrifice of one's life is examined to see if it plays any possible role in the establishment or verification of the legitimacy or inherent nobility of a character.

Chapter 3 The Ultimate Gift: Sacrifice of One's Life

Sacrifice, in the context of the gift of oneself for the benefit of another, is a recurrent theme throughout this study. In the first chapter, female characters, such as Adeline (CB), Eugénie Grandet's mother (EG), Julie d'Aiglemont (FT) and Valentine (F), are seen to be conditioned by an oppressive patriarchal system to sacrifice themselves. The women have little option except to follow the rules imposed by early nineteenth-century French society; but the sacrifice results from resignation to a prescribed role whereas in this chapter the reverse (that is, rejection of society's code of behaviour) seems at times to precipitate events that lead to sacrifice. In the first part of the preceding chapter, sacrifices were made by two gift-bearing strangers whose object was to mould people into a community founded upon generalized exchange and in which collective happiness flourished. Like Véronique and Benassis, the main characters I have selected for the present chapter are all in one way or another strangers to the society they inhabit. They differ, however, from these two gift-bearing strangers in that their giving is much more selective, centring typically on one individual's well-being and/or happiness as opposed to Veronique's and Benassis's more global giving whose aim is to develop a group economically. They contrast also with the bearers of gift in the second part of the preceding chapter where it is typically a question of a "parent-child" relationship; here it is primarily a matter of a heterosexual bonding: the sacrifice is made for someone of the opposite sex with whom a character is in love. Another distinguishing element is that in most cases it is literally a total giving which results in the premature death of a young character. With some, suicide is clearly involved, while with others, it is not; in all cases, however, the aim will be to reveal whether self-sacrifice for another is truly involved and if so, whether it is imposed or willingly undertaken. Note will be made of attachments to the pecuniary and a propensity toward death to see what, if any, pattern can be established with the ultimate gift, the sacrifice of one's life. I shall also try to determine if any link exists between this kind of sacrifice, on the one hand, and love and honour, on the other.

In his pamphlet entitled *D'un nouveau complot contre les industriels* (1825), Stendhal rejects that anything encompassed by the money-dominated society of the early nineteenth century depicts sacrifice; the very idea of sacrifice is inseparable from notions of selflessness and generosity which are foreign to pecuniary interests. Stendhal did not oppose industrialism, which, at the time in predominantly agrarian France, was equated with any economic activity that generated revenue, be it agriculture, trade or even writing. What he did protest, however, was the ever-increasing infiltration of money into society's value structure and the contamination of society as a result. Money was becoming the measure of all value whereas Stendhal maintained that the quantity of money possessed by an individual should be irrelevant in any assessment of his contribution to society or the honour in which he was held. The industrialist (that is, the man for whom economic considerations are foremost) who supplies funds that are used by the forces of tyranny to suppress people fighting for liberty contrasts unfavourably, from Stendhal's perspective, with the man who would renounce pecuniary gain and instead struggle valiantly for his political principles or the advancement of science: "pour arriver à une haute estime, il faut . . . qu'il y ait *sacrifice* de l'intérêt à quelque noble but."[1] In the next chapter, great sacrifice will be shown by artists, such as Joseph Bridau (R), and scientists, such as Balthazar Claës (RA), and the strength to make sacrifices will be seen as a determinant in the development of any innate gifts as well as the creation of their nobility and heroism as characters. For the present chapter, I want to see if the deaths that occur can be linked to sacrifice and if they contribute to the representation of the character's honourability; that is, are the suicides merely a renouncement of life made in despair when the character succumbs (and the bourgeois forces thus triumph), or can the suicides be read from a different perspective in which they become the gift of a life and assume a positive message? Can the gift of self-sacrifice serve to legitimize individuals in the novels?

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[1] Stendhal, *D'un nouveau complot contre les industriels, Oeuvres complètes,* Tome 45: *Mélanges I: Politique, histoire, économie politique*, éds. Victor Del Litto and Ernest Abravanel (Genève: Slatkine Reprints, 1986) 276.

To provide potential examples of the ultimate gift--the sacrifice of one's life--I have selected four novels: Stendhal's *Le rouge et le noir* (1830) and *Armance* (1827); and Balzac's *Les Chouans ou la Bretagne en 1799*, his earliest recognized work (written in 1829 and revised in 1834), and *Splendeurs et misères des courtisanes* (1838-1847). Three of these novels share the same historical setting: the action in each unfolds before the July Revolution of 1830. *Armance* (set in 1827) predates the Revolution of 1830 only slightly, while *Le rouge et le noir* and *Splendeurs et misères des courtisanes* have the most closely associated time frame since Julien, Mme de Rênal, Esther and Lucien all die just prior to the July Revolution. *Les Chouans ou la Bretagne en 1799* is nearer to the Revolution of 1789, but I have chosen to include it here for three reasons. First, it provides an additional case of a heterosexual love relationship which terminates in death. Secondly, Balzac wrote and revised it in the period encompassing the Revolution of 1830; his perspective would thus be different from someone writing in 1799. Thirdly, it will be of interest to note any differences in the relationships that can be attributed to a historical context.

The July Revolution of 1830 was a significant event in French history. It was at this point that the bourgeois in the form of the bankers, financiers, great merchants and one or two industrialists came to control France politically in addition to their already established economic dominance. The Enlightenment writers of the eighteenth century and the Revolution of 1789 had raised false hopes of liberty amongst the people: the years of the Republic and then Napoleon's empire had not brought the anticipated freedom. Napoleon's demise in 1814 which led to the Restoration of the Bourbons under Louis XVIII was actually considered a liberation; it was not until some years after Napoleon's death in 1821 (that is, as 1830 approached) that the myth of Napoleon gained popularity. The tyrant, who placed the crown of emperor on his own head and who created his own aristocracy to fill the gaps made from members of the old nobility still in exile, became idealized into the symbol of the man who lacked birth credentials but achieved the ultimate level of success (that is, equal to or greater than a hereditary monarch) due to his personal merit. This romanticization of Napoleon can be found in the novels of both Stendhal and Balzac: Napoleon is the hero both of Julien Sorel (RN) and of the peasants in *Le médecin de campagne*. Whereas the myth of Napoleon served to glorify the revolutionary past and to keep alive plebeian hopes for equality, fraternity and liberty, the ultras, who along with the clerics formed a ruling elite under Louis XVIII (1814-1824) and Charles X (1824-1830), wanted a return to the ancien régime; that is, the ultras sought a return to the pre-1789 society in which they occupied an indisputable privileged position. The liberals during the Restoration period opposed the ultra or legitimist group who upheld the Bourbons, but rather than support true democracy which would have entailed equality and freedom for the uneducated masses, they tended to favour government by an enlightened despot and an elected assembly chosen by a limited portion of the population. According to the majority of the liberals, this type of government was the only way to protect the rights of minorities in society.

Then came the July Revolution of 1830. The upper bourgeoisie eliminated the political power of the legitimist noble elite. It was now definite that the attempt at restoration had failed: there would be no return to the ancien régime, but neither were the plebeians' aspirations for liberty and equality to be realized. Instead the bourgeois determined that their material interests would be best served by putting a bourgeois monarch on the throne, and thus began the reign of Louis-Philippe--a man whose legitimate claim to the throne was questioned.

I want to turn now to a discussion of legitimacy, which is connected with the topic of sacrifice since it is the sacrifice of the king which operates as a signal that what was previously accepted unquestioningly as legitimate is now under review. The focus will be on *Le rouge et le noir* to see whether Julien remains irrevocably in the position of usurper or if Mathilde's reasoning and efforts can render him "legitimate" because of his personal merit.

Legitimacy

In the preceding chapter the legitimate child, such as Delphine Nucingen or Mathilde de La Mole, is seen as an obstacle to the formation of enduring bonds between the "father" and the adoptive "son". This problem parallels a question in the society of the period: different factions argued about legitimacy and usurpation from the Revolution of 1789 through the Restoration of the Bourbons in 1814 and the coronation of the duc d'Orléans in 1830.[2] For the French of the period, there were strong similarities with the events that surrounded the Glorious Revolution of 1688 in England. Mathilde admires Julien's "profondes discussions sur l'avenir qui attend la France, ses idées sur la ressemblance que les événements qui vont fondre sur nous peuvent avoir avec la révolution de 1688 en Angleterre" (RN 554). As early as August 1815, Stendhal pointed out the parallel in a letter to his sister: "Si tu veux voir l'histoire de France écrite d'avance, lis les trois derniers volumes des *Stuarts*, de Hume, et la *Pologne* de Rulhière."[3] Then in *Armance*, written in 1827: "M. de Bonnivet avait toujours craint de voir finir la restauration de France comme celle d'Angleterre" (A 155). The young Henri Beyle rejoiced at the execution of Louis XVI in 1793, but this was not the attitude of the Bourbon supporters because, like Charles I executed in 1649, Louis XVI was the legitimate ruler in their opinion. Charles I and Louis XVI may be regarded as victims of their position.[4] The Bourbon supporters thought the monarch had been unjustly murdered, whereas the republicans felt he was either guilty and/or sacrificed for the greater good. The angry exchange between the republican Gérard and the monarchist marquis de Montauran in *Les Chouans*, following the perfidious massacre of the republican troops who had been promised safe passage, serves to underline the distance separating these two perspectives on legitimacy:

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[2] Balzac turned from his early republican sympathies to a more paternalistic attitude and came to see in the monarchy and religion the means to control the masses and maintain order in society. Stendhal, for his part, is what René Girard describes as "un athée en politique". (René Girard, *Mensonge romantique et vérité romanesque* [Paris: Grasset, 1961] 139.) H.-F. Imbert depicts how Stendhal favoured liberty as the route to happiness although he remained skeptical about its implementation in the immediate future where a type of constitutional empire would have been preferable for him. In 1814, he accepted the Restoration and believed in the reeducation of the nobility as an alternative to Napoleon's despotism, but he soon came to once more support the Napoleonic era because, despite being a dictatorship, at least glory and exuberance could be found rather than the moral decrepitude characteristic of the Restoration. (Henri-François Imbert, *Les métamorphoses de la liberté ou Stendhal devant la Restauration et le Risorgimento* [Paris: J. Corti, 1967]).

> --J'aime mieux périr ainsi que de triompher comme vous, dit Gérard. . . . Les avoir assassinés lâchement, froidement!
> --Comme le fut Louis XVI, monsieur, répondit vivement le marquis.
> --Monsieur . . . il existe dans le procès d'un Roi des mystères que vous ne comprendrez jamais.
> --Accuser le Roi! . . .
> --Combattre la France! . . .
> --Niaiserie, dit le marquis.
> --Parricide! reprit le Républicain.
> --Régicide! (C 1049)

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[3] Stendhal, *Correspondance*, t.1 (Paris: Bibliothèque de la Pléiade, 1968) 808 quoted in A. Purdy, "Un cheval nommé Sorrel et une taupe régicide. Réflexions onomastiques sur *Le rouge et le noir*," *Stendhal Club* 86 (1980): 147.

[4] According to René Girard, "Les risques de mort violente aux mains d'une foule déchaînée sont statistiquement plus élevés pour les privilégiés que pour toute autre catégorie." René Girard, *Le bouc émissaire* (Paris: Grasset, 1982) 30.

Fear of the bloodshed from another revolution is expressed by several characters. (Mathilde de La Mole, who would welcome another revolution as an opportunity for heroic actions, is the outstanding exception here.) Mme de Rênal asks Julien never to forget her children: "S'il y a une nouvelle révolution, tous les nobles seront égorgés" (RN 365). Later Julien swears he will do everything within his power to protect her children in the event of renewed persecution against the nobility. Because of his love a reversal occurs with his former "haine . . . contre les riches" (RN 270) and his mockery of "des enfants . . . *si bien nés*" (RN 289). The Rênal children and Mme de Rênal are now viewed as beloved individuals to be protected and are considered separate from the detested homogeneous mass of the nobility.

M. de Chasteller, in *Lucien Leuwen*, and Mme de Miossens, in *Lamiel*, also live in dread of a renewed terror. Chasteller lives in Nancy which is close to the frontier and always has horses reserved in preparation for an immediate flight, should the people revolt. When the duchess imagines the hoards in revolt and flees, Lamiel is caught up in her imaginary nightmare of horror, and as Julien intends to protect the Rênal children, Lamiel will help Mme de Miossens. Also, Mme de Miossens's tower, something like the fallout shelters of the 1960s, is considered a place of refuge from the revolutionary masses.

Besides the division between the monarchists and republicans, a further split occurs within the royalist ranks between the ultras, such as Mme de Chasteller, who uphold the Bourbon lineage and those favouring the Orléans branch. For the ultras, who supported hereditary descendance and the inviolable divine right of kings instituted by God, compromise was impossible. A parallel was made between Charles II of England and Louis XVIII while Charles X was compared with James II, the legitimate ruler who was overthrown in England in 1688. The duc d'Orléans, who was to become Louis-Philippe, was equated with

William of Orange, who became William III of England, and both were labeled usurpers by the ultras. The importance of being seen as legitimate is seen in William's attempts to discredit James II's infant son as an imposter, and thus make the legitimate appear illegitimate, while at the same time focusing on making his wife Mary, James's daughter by a previous marriage, seem the legitimate claimant.[5] The Orléans supported the Revolution: Louis-Philippe's father voted for Louis XVI's execution, and Louis-Philippe fought for a time in the republican army. Louis-Philippe, who like William of Orange acquired his throne by illegitimate means, came from outside the Bourbon dynasty and therefore was not entitled, even though the constitution attempted to give him legitimacy. The throne was given to him in 1830, but distortion of the gift is evident since the throne of the absolutist legitimate monarch Charles X was degraded to that occupied by an intruder known as a bourgeois monarch. Even the title indicates the encroachment which had occurred: each Bourbon ruler was recognized as King of France,[6] whereas the duc d'Orléans was to become Louis-Philippe, King of the French.

According to Fiske:

> A culture does not only generate meanings, it provides a framework for making sense of the experienced world: people use the constructs their culture provides to understand the world. In particular, people utilize the social constructs in a culture (which are built on the foundation of the basic models) to make social relations intelligible. . . . people draw on the models to generate appropriate action, but they also draw on other models to understand what other people are doing (and in turn to respond appropriately).[7]

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[5] Maurice Ashley, *The Glorious Revolution of 1688* (London: Hodder, 1966) 135.

[6] During the French Revolution before his execution, Louis XVI had been transformed from King of France to King of the French--a title change that indicated his position as monarch was no longer considered his inherent right; the source of his power was now exterior to him.

[7] Alan Page Fiske, *Structures of Social Life: The Four Elementary Forms of Human Relations* (NY: Free Press, 1991) 180.

The problem with the early nineteenth century was that it was a period marked by great fluctuations; social constructs were no longer clear, nor were the values inscribed into them. Under the feudal system, which had endured for centuries, everyone knew his rights and duties and acted accordingly. The novels of Balzac and Stendhal situated prior to 1830 give a representation of the struggle in progress between the vested interests, on the one hand, of the nobility, who wanted to reinstate all the birthrights that they had enjoyed prior to the Revolution and to secure their position as a ruling elite in conjunction with the Bourbon Restoration, and, on the other hand, of the bourgeoisie who wanted to extend their economic hegemony into the political sphere. In the novels, the nobility based upon the old system of birth and the bourgeoisie based upon the increasing importance of money vie for power, while another element questions the legitimacy of either claim: for Stendhal and Balzac individual merit takes precedence over birth and money. Birth alone does not assure legitimacy, and legitimacy cannot be purchased.

René Girard offers an insightful historical perspective about the Revolution of 1789 that relates to legitimacy: "La révolution ne détruit qu'une chose, la plus importante bien qu'elle paraisse vide aux esprits vides: le droit divin des rois."[8] It is the most important because it was the very foundation upon which the caste system rested so that what was accepted as fact before 1789 was now challenged. The ultras' aim to reinstate the Bourbons, the legitimate rulers, complicated the situation since their ulterior motive was to restore the privileges of a nobility that had ceased to represent what was noble. Girard's examination of the ultra party unveils:

> l'embourgeoisement de la noblesse. Ce parti se consacre exclusivement à la défense du privilège; son désaccord avec le roi Louis XVIII a clairement révélé

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[8] Girard, *Mensonge* 124.

> que la monarchie n'est plus l'étoile polaire de la noblesse mais un instrument politique aux mains du parti noble. Ce n'est pas vers le roi mais vers la bourgeoisie rivale que ce parti noble est orienté. L'idéologie *ultra* n'est d'ailleurs que le renversement pur et simple de l'idéologie révolutionnaire. Tout en elle est *réaction*.[9]

Although the ultras verbally espoused the doctrine of the divine right of kings, their disagreement with Louis XVIII indicates that they did not recognize him as the supreme authority, but as a buttress against the infringement of their rights. In Stendhal's opinion, birth in itself did not confer legitimacy, which is a quality that must be proven. He categorized both his father, Chérubin Beyle, and the Bourbon king, Louis XVIII, in the illegitimate bastard domain because in his view they failed to meet the required standards and thus disqualified themselves.[10] Attention surrounding the legitimacy of a father or another based upon birth arises in the novel when M. de Rênal asserts his position as "*légitime*" (RN 353) in the face of Julien's usurpation.

An indication of the decaying nobility can also be seen in M. de Rênal, "le personnage le plus aristocratique de Verrières" (RN 230), "[qui] [d]epuis 1815 . . . rougit d'être industriel" (RN 221). Although he clings to his noble heritage, he too has been infiltrated by "le grand mot qui décide de tout à Verrières: RAPPORTER DU REVENU" (RN 224). Rênal names his son Stanislas-Xavier, no doubt after Louis XVIII known previously as Louis Stanislas Xavier, but he changes political allegiance when Valenod successfully manoeuvres himself into favour with the ultras. Julien finds it amusing that M. de Rênal is now considered a Jacobin, and as Girard writes: "Prendre au sérieux le libéralisme de M. de Rênal, c'est détruire l'essence même du *Rouge et le Noir*."[11]

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[9] Girard, *Mensonge* 131.
[10] Imbert 87.
[11] Girard, *Mensonge* 137.

While the old nobility of Paris in *Le rouge et le noir* is sufficiently wealthy to be largely unconcerned with pecuniary interests,[12] the decay amidst this group remains apparent in the overwhelming boredom of their existence. Julien avidly consumes reading material because he is deeply interested in the subject matter, whereas Norbert de La Mole studies the newspaper to obtain information for conversations. Like other young nobles, such as the comte de Caylus and the marquis de Croisenois, Norbert de La Mole drifts aimlessly through life. Nobility, similar to a gift which has been passed on from one generation to another, has encountered an obstacle in the bourgeoisie and stagnated: the gift is fast disintegrating and the capability of its transmission is mortally threatened. As Girard explains: "Il y eut d'abord la noblesse; il y eut ensuite la classe noble; finalement il n'y a plus qu'un parti. Après avoir coïncidé, noblesse spirituelle et noblesse sociale tendent à s'exclure mutuellement."[13] It is Mathilde who scorns the lethargy of the nobility which has allowed the erosion of society by bourgeois interests, and it is she who would awaken the noble heroism of the past. According to Mathilde, in the monetary milieu she inhabits, only one thing can set a man apart: "la condamnation à mort . . . c'est la seule chose qui ne s'achète pas" (RN 489).

Mathilde is full of admiration for "le comte Altamira, condamné à mort" (RN 489) who recognizes Julien's merit and seems to echo her sentiments about the lack of passion and the superficial level of thought characteristic of nineteenth-century French society. A desire to complete the gift circle of give-accept-return is apparent when Altamira "[d]éspérant de l'Europe" looks to America to return the gift of liberty: "quand les États de l'Amérique méridionale seront forts et puissants, ils pourront rendre à l'Europe la liberté que Mirabeau leur a envoyée" (RN 491).

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[12] Later in this chapter, the old nobility in *Armance* (1827) as well will be seen paying homage to money. Also, even the marquis de La Mole makes money selling investments.

[13] Girard, *Mensonge* 132.

The old European nobility has lost its former vivacity and no longer serves to depict heroic action. According to Altamira, the energy of America holds the possibility of revitalizing Europe; hopefully, the gift of liberty, given through intrepidity and valour, will circulate back to restore Europe's fervour.[14]

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Although Mathilde (like Altamira) acknowledges Julien's merit, this acknowledgment is not constant. As a result, whether Julien can be rendered "legitimate" in any permanent sense becomes repeatedly questioned. For example, Julien, the usurper, must forever prove his innate nobility and thus his "legitimate" claim to Mathilde's affections because of his personal merit. Mathilde de La Mole exemplifies what Stendhal classifies as "[l']amour de tête" (RN 556) in which reason as opposed to passion dominates: "Mme de Rênal trouvait des raisons pour faire ce que son coeur lui dictait: cette jeune fille du grand monde ne laisse son coeur s'émouvoir que lorsqu'elle s'est prouvé par bonnes raisons qu'il doit être ému" (RN 617-18). Examples of Mathilde's giving of herself being tied to reason abound: "continuera-t-il à me mériter? A la première faiblesse que je vois en lui, je l'abandonne" (RN 512). When Julien complies with her request to come to her bedroom her initial reaction is: "Ah! que cet homme est digne de tout mon amour!" (RN 540), but her attitude quickly changes when her father's servant appears to occupy a position of superiority. Her penchant for employing reason to prove Julien's "legitimate" claim is demonstrated again when she decides to marry Julien (even though she truly loves him, love is not sufficient justification for her): "Elle passait sa vie à s'exagérer la haute prudence qu'elle avait montrée en liant son sort à celui d'un homme supérieur. Le mérite personnel était à la mode *dans sa tête*"

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[14] Stendhal himself would have been less optimistic than Altamira about America as a source of regeneration for France. The importance attached to money in the United States distanced that country from Stendhal's esteem, a subject which will be dealt with in greater detail in the next chapter. In Stendhal's opinion, the United States concentrated too heavily upon pecuniary pursuits at the expense of other more worthy areas such as the development of the arts.

(RN 635, my italics). She initially gives herself physically to Julien out of what she sees as her duty, but if anything, there is a negative return on this gift given from obligation. Julien experiences "bonheur" due to his triumph, but no amorous bonds form: "Ces belles façons de Paris ont trouvé le secret de tout gâter, même l'amour" (RN 543). For her part, Mathilde wonders about "le malheur et la honte qu'elle avait trouvés au lieu de cette entière félicité dont parlent les romans" (RN 544). In the preceding chapter, it was seen that giving from a sense of duty is one of the fundamentals for building trust and interpersonal ties in cases of generalized exchange. The problem with Mathilde's gift for reasons of duty is that the situation involves restricted, not generalized exchange, and much interference comes from the gulf which separates them into two distant social groups: the highest nobility and the peasantry. Mathilde thinks that she can close the gap through gift: "Que lui manque-t-il? des amis, de l'argent? Je lui en donne. Mais sa pensée traitait un peu Julien en être inférieur, dont on se fait aimer quand on veut" (RN 553). Even in her own thoughts, Julien does not occupy the irrefutable position of superiority in society that she does: her rank is inviolable while his remains forever conditional.

Mathilde initially singles out Julien as someone "[qui] n'est pas né à genoux" (RN 459), but her attraction to him oscillates greatly as she tries to reconcile their social disparity. At one point she assigns herself: "de la grandeur et de l'audace à oser aimer un homme placé si loin de moi par sa position sociale" (RN 512). At other times she expresses shame: "J'ai horreur de m'être livrée au premier venu" (RN 546). She is forever conscious of their social positions and suffers when she believes Julien has abandoned her for Mme de Fervaques. It would be insufferable to the proud Mathilde of the *haute noblesse* to be rebuffed by anyone; that the rejection should come from someone at Julien's level--her father's servant--is definitely unacceptable.

In effect, what interferes most with Mathilde's giving is her excessive pride. At times, she shows she is cognizant of this fact and expresses a desire to reverse the actual social hierarchy. The gift of her hair is to be symbolic of her inverted position, but even here Mathilde has not completely relinquished power. She still dominates, cutting her hair even though Julien, her supposed master, had tried to prevent her from doing so:

> Punis-moi de mon orgueil atroce . . . règne à jamais sur moi, punis sévèrement ton esclave quand elle voudra se révolter . . . si jamais un exécrable orgueil vient m'égarer, montre-moi ces cheveux et dis . . . vous avez juré d'obéir, obéissez sur l'honneur . . . Je renonce à l'exercice de ma raison, sois mon maître (RN 559-60)

The simplicity with which Mme de Rênal "coupa une mèche de ses cheveux" (RN 365) stands in contrast with Mathilde's gift. Mme de Rênal's is a symbolic gift from the heart, whereas Mathilde's grandiose offering is tied to the heroic role in which she envisions herself. Mathilde, who remains superior and sets the rules to be followed, has given herself by choice and is also free to refuse the gift. It is not until Julien assumes the dominant position in the relationship (by courting Mme de Fervaques) that she truly regrets her pride: "Vous savez bien que j'ai de l'orgueil; c'est le malheur de ma position et même de mon caractère" (RN 615). Using his theory of triangular desire, Girard explains Julien's triumph: "L'intérêt que lui porte la maréchale réveille le désir de Mathilde. Et le triangle réapparaît... Mathilde, Mme de Fervacques, Julien... ; M. de Rênal, Valenod, Julien... Le triangle réapparaît toutes les fois que Stendhal parle de vanité, qu'il s'agisse d'ambition, de commerce ou d'amour."[15] His success is further assured by his semblance of indifference: "En affectant l'indifférence envers Mathilde et en excitant le désir de Mme Fervacques, Julien n'offre pas un mais deux désirs à l'imitation de la jeune fille. Il cherche à multiplier les chances de contagion."[16]

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[15] Girard, *Mensonge* 15-16.

[16] Girard, *Mensonge* 112. Triangular desire also arises in *Armance* when Octave believes Armance is interested in the chevalier de Bonnivet and Armance thinks he loves Mme d'Aumale (A 166).

While the ultra royalists would have returned to the days of absolutist rule before 1789 in order to secure their privileged position, Mathilde goes back further still to the spirit of the sixteenth century when, for her, heroism and nobility were equated. René Girard gives a description of what she is seeking: "Il faut, à l'origine, qu'il y ait noblesse au sens spirituel pour qu'il y ait noblesse au sens social. A un certain moment de l'histoire les deux sens du mot noble ont donc coïncidé, au moins en théorie."[17] She sees herself as capable of heroic action, and she perceives Julien as the one who can *give* her the opportunity to display her abilities:

> Compagne d'un homme tel que Julien, auquel il ne manque que de la fortune que j'ai,[18] j'exciterai continuellement l'attention, je ne passerai point inaperçue dans la vie. Bien loin de redouter sans cesse une révolution comme mes cousines, . . . je serai sûre de jouer un rôle et un grand rôle, car l'homme que j'ai choisi a du caractère et une ambition sans bornes. . . . S'il y a une révolution, pourquoi Julien Sorel ne jouerait-il pas le rôle de Roland, et moi celui de Mme Roland? (RN 553-54)

When Mathilde discovers she is pregnant, and Julien is imprisoned, she demonstrates the firmness of her character in continuing to give to him. At this time, she is bound to him by love, but the element of duty is still present as she shows in her letter to her father: "j'irai . . . rejoindre [Julien] où il voudra. C'est son droit, c'est mon *devoir*, il est le père de mon enfant" (RN 627, my italics). She asks her father for money but states her determination to carry out her intentions even in the absence of his gift. She, "*Mathilde-Marguerite*" de La Mole, will prove herself worthy of the same heroism as "la reine Marguerite de Navarre . . . [qui] osa faire demander au bourreau la tête de son amant" (RN 504) Boniface de La Mole in 1574. She, in effect, foreshadows the superiority of her future action: "Quelle femme actuellement vivante n'aurait horreur de toucher à la tête de son amant décapité?" (RN 506).[19] Mathilde underlines her own nobility in her parting gift of care to Julien when she seeks out his decapitated head, kisses it, carries it to its final resting spot and personally buries it. Part of her greatness lies in her acknowledgment of Julien's worth and her faithfulness to him. (The novel ends before revealing if Julien is correct in his prediction that Mathilde will later attribute her actions to the frivolity of her youth.) Mathilde is unsuccessful, however, in her attempts to get society to recognize Julien as legitimate. In general, rather than elevating Julien, Mathilde's actions tend to compromise her own position in society; her sacrifice is unable to gain him admission into the privileged group, and a complete reversal in the intended direction of the social movement occurs.

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[17] Girard, *Mensonge* 122.

[18] Here again Mathilde believes that she can overcome the social gap through gift.

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The main opposition to the recognition of Julien's merit comes from the bourgeoisie, a group devoid of noble sentiments and for whom money is the measure of all value. Julien's contempt for the bourgeoisie shows in his following comment: "Il me reste un moyen d'être considérable à leurs yeux: c'est de jeter au peuple des pièces d'or en allant au supplice. Ma mémoire, liée à l'idée de l'*or*, sera resplendissante pour eux" (RN 648). For Julien, the bourgeoisie's attachment to money is despicable, and he distances himself from them here with the verb *jeter* that situates him in the realm of Bataille's expenditure which is linked with *consumation* and results in a liberating energy. A bourgeois would not be capable of such wastage, but the noble Mathilde is. Following the funeral service, Mathilde fulfills Julien's wish when she "fit *jeter* plusieurs milliers de pièces de cinq francs" (RN 699, my italics). (Since Julien does not express his wish in her presence, it is as if two noble spirits--Julien and Mathilde--had the same thought.)

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[19] Just as Mathilde envisions herself in the role of Marguerite de Navarre, Julien appears to measure his behaviour after another when he asks: "Croyez-vous que Boniface de La Mole ait été mieux devant ses juges?" (RN 678).

Mathilde also endeavours to preserve his memory through a more traditional gift: she decorates his burial site with expensive marble sculptures from Italy. Even after his death, she thus strives to elevate Julien from the peasantry to the nobility.

During his life, Julien is forever conscious of his usurper role because of his low birth and searches to have his personal merit recognized. The main trait that distinguishes him from the bourgeoisie and the peasants is his lack of attraction to money. If he were seeking money, he would accept Korasoff's offer of marriage to the prince's cousin from Moscow. Instead, he takes Korasoff's letters in an attempt to win back Mathilde, expressing his gratitude and obligation for the gift when he succeeds: "O grand homme! que ne te dois-je pas?" (RN 620). If he were seeking money and power, he would show interest in rising in the ranks as a bishop, rather than concentrating on Mathilde. When he receives the marquis's gifts of money and promotion into the nobility, Julien is extremely surprised and overjoyed; it is not, however, a totally selfish achievement since he frequently thinks about providing for his son's future.[20]

Julien shows himself immune to pecuniary interests as a primary determinant of his behaviour on other occasions as well. He could have gone into partnership with Fouqué and become wealthy; he could have married Élisa, Mme de Rênal's maid who received an inheritance; and he could have accepted a tutor position at higher pay. When M. de La Mole offers money to Julien, his secretary, he can accept if the transaction is properly documented; it must be refused, however, when the recipient is Julien, the son of the marquis's noble friend: "Que monsieur le marquis daigne souffrir que je refuse ce don. Ce n'est pas à l'homme en habit noir qu'il est adressé, et il gâterait tout à fait les façons que l'on a la bonté de tolérer chez l'homme en habit bleu" (RN 480). (The marquis had previously given Julien a blue outfit which functions as a symbol of Julien's "legitimacy" whereby Julien is endowed with noble birth and thus treated with equality.) It is perhaps Julien's dignified refusal which spurs the marquis to present him with a cross: "Je ne veux pas vous faire quitter votre habit noir, et je suis accoutumé au ton plus amusant que j'ai pris avec l'homme portant l'habit bleu. . . . quand je verrai cette croix, vous serez le fils cadet de mon ami le duc de Chaulnes" (RN 482).

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[20] Julien refers to *their* child as "*votre* enfant" (RN 665, my italics) when speaking to Mathilde, but he seems more inclined to think of the child as *his*, and the fact that Mathilde is the mother seems incidental. As well, Julien never considers that the unborn child may be female. He refers to it as "mon fils" (RN 630, 631, 665, 666, 684), and the narrator uses "son fils" (RN 635, 642). Perhaps producing a daughter in a patriarchy would be a sign of weakness; or is it that only a male in a patriarchy would be capable of picking up where Julien is stopped?

The question of legitimacy and degradation arises again regarding the cross, which is meant as a symbol of distinction, but which for Mathilde signifies little, if any, substance and valour: "une croix, cela se donne; mon frère vient de l'avoir, qu'a-t-il fait?" (RN 490). Julien hints at this when prince Korasoff indicates what Julien's cross will achieve: "Mais cette croix n'est pas donnée par Napoléon" (RN 594). In this instance, the cross is another case of the purchased or illegitimate being made to pass for the authentic. Although Julien may merit the cross, he obtains it only through the marquis de La Mole's position of power and wealth.[21]

Julien is excluded from the nobility because he lacks the prerequisite of noble birth; he is, however, worthy of the highest recognition. His personal nobility of character represents a threat to those among the parvenu like Valenod who think they can buy legitimacy. Julien's chosen sacrifice of his life elevates him and buys him the distinction which money cannot: he does not become part of the homogeneous bourgeois mass where everything is measured by a pecuniary equivalent. A parallel exists here with Jean-Joseph Goux's theory about "ce qui dans l'objet résiste à la mise en commun, reste *hétérogène, extérieur* au principe même de l'échange."[22] All that is needed for Goux's doctrine to apply is to change the focus from an object to a person--in this case, to Julien. As Julien Sorel de La Vernaye, he would never be more than another rich parvenu intent upon infiltrating the nobility. Examples from the parvenu group include Montcornet in *Les paysans*, Philippe in *La rabouilleuse*, Nerwinde in *Lamiel*, not to mention M. le baron de Valenod: they all possess a title and money, but their birth and bourgeois behaviour exclude them from recognition by the "true" "legitimate" nobility, such as the marquis de La Mole. (Montcornet is considered a usurper even by the peasants.) The situation is further complicated by the decadence within the old nobility itself which does not seem able to regenerate itself in order to stave off the degenerating pecuniary interests of the bourgeoisie which seems to be making inroads everywhere:

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[21] Additional examples of characters who obtain the cross for questionable reasons are Stendhal's Féder and Balzac's Crevel (CB), Marneffe (CB) and César Birotteau (B). The cross, as represented in the novel, has become tied to money and power, not merit.

> Médiatisée par le regard bourgeois, la noblesse copie la bourgeoisie sans même s'en douter. . . . on s'embourgeoise par haine de la bourgeoisie. Et, puisque la médiation est réciproque, il faut prévoir un bourgeois-gentilhomme qui fera le pendant du gentilhomme-bourgeois, il faut s'attendre à une comédie bourgeoise, symétrique et inverse de la comédie aristocratique.[23]

Girard thus explains the double erosion which is occurring within early nineteenth-century society. Not only are the ranks of the aristocracy being infiltrated by the bourgeoisie, but its existing members are also being contaminated by bourgeois values. In the remainder of the chapter, I want to look at sacrifice in the novels as a possible means of resistance to this contamination.

Sacrifice and Death

Sacrifice, which typically results in suicide or an equivalent thereof, is a recurrent theme in each of the four main novels studied in this chapter. In situating suicide historically, it becomes evident that attitudes towards it have varied greatly over time and among different societies. The Stoics and Epicureans, for example, were amongst the few in the ancient world who approved of suicide, which even then was not so much encouraged as it was recognized as an expression of free will or as an honourable solution to a problematic situation. According to Glen Evans and Norman Faberow, who cite Samson as an example, both the Old and New Testament are relatively neutral on suicide, which would help explain the belief as late as the fourth century that suicide could hasten eternal bliss by an early entry into heaven.[24] It was the church fathers, such as St. Augustine, who labeled suicide a crime, and it is to eliminate the negative stigma attached to it in the novel that Lucien Chardon de Rubempré's suicide is concealed.

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[22] Jean-Joseph Goux, *Freud, Marx: Économie et symbolique.*(Paris: Seuil, 1973) 185.

[23] Girard, *Mensonge* 128-29.

In *Suicide*, published in 1897 (and still studied today despite recognized flaws in its methodology), Durkheim concluded that, with what he termed "egoistic suicide", the rate of suicide varied inversely with the degree of social integration of a society; that is, as social integration decreased, suicide increased. Durkheim's ideas help explain an increased suicide rate during the first half of the nineteenth century, a period marked by social disintegration and general instability. Imbert would appear to support this theory when he cites an opinion in the *Bibliothèque historique* that points to the disequilibrium in the political and social arenas as the cause of suicide.[25] In addition, if ever a period condoned suicide--almost to the point of encouraging it by attributing a positive value to suicide--that period would encompass the early nineteenth-century Romantics. From a Romantic view, rather than a gesture of despair or cowardly weakness, suicide was an act of defiant revolt against ever-encroaching bourgeois values. Given the increased incidence of suicide in society, it is not surprising that both

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[24] Glen Evans and Norman L. Farberow, "Stoic Philosophy," *The Encyclopedia of Suicide* (NY: Facts on File, 1988) ix.

[25] Imbert 441.

Stendhal and Balzac created characters who voluntarily end their lives; it was a current issue in society. An examination of these characters, as well as those who do not die but sacrifice themselves at least in part for another, will be of interest to see what, if any, resistance to the pecuniary can be revealed in the sacrifice/gift. Of particular concern will be the identification of any links that involve various combinations of the gift with love and honour.

* * *

The theme of sacrifice and death surfaces repeatedly in *Le rouge et le noir*. Before turning to Mathilde, Mme de Rênal and Julien, I want to look briefly at two minor characters, the marquis de Croisenois and Fouqué. Croisenois is representative of the stagnation of the *haute noblesse* and clings to the now boring and meaningless principles of his class. In conquering Mathilde, Julien anticipates: "le divin plaisir de me voir *sacrifier* le marquis de Croisenois" (RN 534, my italics). His word *sacrifier* proves to be prophetic since Croisenois ends up sacrificing his life in defence of Mathilde's honour which is threatened because of her liaison with Julien. Croisenois is described as worthy of love, and yet he does not receive Mathilde's; she explains her preference for Julien to her father: "C'est en vain que dans le dessein de vous plaire j'ai songé à M. de Croisenois. Pourquoi aviez-vous placé le vrai mérite sous mes yeux?" (RN 627). Even though he gives the ultimate gift (that is, his life) on her behalf, it is doubtful that Croisenois would gain esteem in Mathilde's eyes because of her view on the bravery shown by a duel: "le duel n'est plus qu'une cérémonie. Tout en est su d'avance, même ce que l'on doit dire en tombant" (RN 528).

The valour is also diminished by Julien's previous duel with M. de Beauvoisis, whose servant steals his calling cards and then insults Julien: "Mon Dieu! un duel, n'est-ce que ça! pensait Julien" (RN 474). Neither intends to kill the other, and the duel is reduced to a game with rules to be followed for the preservation of honour. For example, Beauvoisis elevates Julien to the position of an illegitimate son of a friend of the marquis de La Mole because he cannot admit that he fought a lowly secretary. In *Armance*, the cause of the duel seems just as ridiculous since Octave does not love Mme d'Aumale, and it is doubtful that love is a motive for the marquis de Crêveroche who continues the duel out of anger for his slight wound, which might temporarily prevent him from dancing. Octave shows no hypocritical regret for the instigator of the duel: "Ce n'est qu'un fat de moins" (A 133). Later, when he does refer to his opponent as "[c]e pauvre marquis de Crêveroche" (A 142), his thoughts turn to his dog, which may be a genuine concern for the animal or perhaps represent the desire of a dying young man to camouflage an amorous gift of devotion to the woman he loves.

The death of the marquis de Croisenois interferes with Julien's plans to give Mathilde back to the man whom she probably would have married if Julien had not appeared. Rather than making a request of Mathilde to allow herself to be given to Croisenois, Julien states his desire as a command to be obeyed. The gift (Mathilde as a wife) is intended to provide for Croisenois's future as well as Mathilde's: "Votre position dans le monde, votre fortune, et . . . votre génie, feront jouer à M. de Croisenois . . . un rôle auquel tout seul il ne saurait atteindre. Il n'a que de la naissance et de la bravoure, et ces qualités toutes seules, qui faisaient un homme accompli en 1729, sont un anachronisme un siècle plus tard" (RN 665). When this route is closed to lessening the damage he has caused, he chooses another husband for Mathilde, M. de Luz, who also comes from Mathilde's group. With M. de Luz, Mathilde will enjoy distinction, and her past association with Julien will not taint her future.

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Fouqué is at the opposite end of the social spectrum from Croisenois, but he too is capable of sacrifice. Although he wants to make money, it is not an all-consuming passion for him, and Stendhal always has this great giver on hand to help Julien, be it in Verrières, at the seminary, in Paris, in prison or after his death. In the instance involving prison, the narrator remarks: "Son unique idée . . . était de vendre tout son bien pour séduire le geôlier et faire sauver Julien" (RN 653). Julien is correct when he reflects: "Que d'économies . . . il *sacrifie* pour moi!" (RN 653, my italics) and when he wonders what handsome young Parisian amongst those he met at the marquis's "serait capable d'un tel *sacrifice*?" (RN 654, my italics). Fouqué's genuine offer of gift thus functions to highlight his generosity, which in some respects is even greater than Mathilde's since she does not have the same attachment to money. Fouqué's quiet giving contrasts with Mathilde's gift, which also has the aim of helping Julien but through impressing the public with her heroism and devotion. Fouqué "ne savait trop que blâmer dans le dévouement de Mathilde; car lui aussi eût *sacrifié* toute sa fortune et exposé sa vie aux plus grands hasards pour *sauver* Julien. Il était stupéfait de la quantité d'or *jetée* par Mathilde" (RN 663, my italics). Both want to help Julien, but Fouqué remains in the realm of *consommation* where it is a question of investment and return; that is, he is willing to spend but only if it will help Julien. Mathilde, on the other hand, would enter Bataille's domain of *consumation*. Throwing money around is a release of energy as much as it is an effort to save Julien. (As was discussed previously, it is Mathilde who continues to throw away money even after Julien's death.)

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Mathilde's fascination with death is evident several times in the novel; for example, her admiration for Marguerite de Navarre has a strong link with death, and she classifies the comte Altamira's death sentence as a distinguishing mark which augments his personal worth. Then, when Julien makes a gesture to slay her, she is delighted and reflects upon his superiority in comparison with the young men of the nobility who would be incapable of such a passionate action. Her loyalty to Julien after his imprisonment does not weaken, and despite her jealousy of Mme de Rênal, she contemplates sacrificing herself to him:

> S'il meurt, je meurs après lui . . . Que diraient les salons de Paris en voyant une fille de mon rang adorer à ce point un amant destiné à la mort? Pour trouver de tels sentiments, il faut remonter au temps des héros . . . L'idée de suicide . . . jusqu'ici si éloignée de cette âme altière, y pénétra, et bientôt y régna avec un empire absolu (RN 664)

Rather than a sacrifice centred solely on Julien, Mathilde's sacrifice encompasses other considerations; whereas her passion for Julien may develop and be strong, reason rather than passion largely dominates her actions. Her pride and conceptions of nobility, heroism and duty are forces which guide the sacrifices she makes.

Even if Mathilde does not kill herself, her actions are in the domain of sacrifice, which is foreshadowed in the chapter entitled *Les cheveux*: "Julien pût apercevoir du premier coup d'oeil toute l'étendue du *sacrifice* qu'elle avait fait pour lui" (RN 561, my italics). Julien's death is also presaged in the same chapter; the clothes he leaves in Mathilde's room are termed "dépouille mortelle" (RN 561), and the chapter ends with an image of death: "être mort au physique comme je le suis au moral. Julien ne vit plus, c'est son cadavre qui s'agite encore" (RN 562). Julien uses the same description of "dépouille mortelle" (RN 698) to refer to what will remain once he is executed. Near the end of the novel, Julien recognizes all that Mathilde has given to him, and it troubles him that he no longer feels the love for Mathilde that would allow him to give in return: "Elle se perd pour moi, et c'est ainsi que je l'en récompense! . . . il est affreux de se sentir ingrat et de ne pouvoir se changer. Je suis donc un égoïste?" (RN 662, 664). Stendhal's character provides support for Mauss's theory that the gift-recipient feels under an obligation to return the gift. Part of the anxiety Julien experiences in breaking the gift-giving circle of give-accept-return can be attributed to bonds that still exist between himself and Mathilde. Her pregnancy is evidence of her past gift of herself to Julien and of his acceptance of the gift. He has not repaid this gift (which leaves him in a state of obligation), and at the same time, Mathilde continues to give to him; he thus becomes even more indebted.

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While Mathilde sacrifices herself because of ideals of heroism and duty mixed in at times with love, Mme de Rênal's sacrifice results purely from love. I shall examine this character from the perspectives of the gift-giver, the mother and the wife, all of which point in the direction of the willing self-sacrifice.

Mme de Rênal is a very compassionate gift-giver, making different offers of gifts to Julien, who consistently refuses. The first time occurs before her realization of love for him:

> elle eut envie de lui faire des *cadeaux*, mais elle n'osa pas . . . Mme de Rênal parla à son mari de lui faire un *cadeau* de linge: -- Quelle duperie! répondit-il. Quoi! faire des *cadeaux* à un homme dont nous sommes parfaitement contents, et qui nous sert bien? ce serait dans le cas où il se négligerait qu'il faudrait stimuler son zèle (RN 250, my italics)

Mme de Rênal has the sentiments of a disinterested giver, such as Véronique in *Le curé de village,* while her husband displays those of a capitalist who rejects an investment because of its lack of return. (The "RAPPORTER DU REVENU" [RN 224] maxim truly appears to guide his actions.) In her effort to give to Julien, she attempts to make it palatable by inferring the gift is insignificant: "je suis l'unique héritière d'une tante fort riche qui habite Besançon. Elle me comble de présents... Mes fils font des progrès... si étonnants... que je voudrais vous prier d'accepter un petit présent comme marque de ma reconnaissance" (RN 253). Julien's pride does not allow him to accept the gift, especially after Mme de Rênal says not to mention it to her husband, and by refusing the gift, Julien acquires her admiration and respect. When Julien is leaving for the seminary, Mme de Rênal's offer of money is met with the response: "Voulez-vous . . . rendre le souvenir de nos amours abominable?" (RN 367) which indicates the contamination to be brought to symbolic bonds by the pecuniary. In the same chapter, the question of sacrifice arises when Mme de Rênal is making a "grand sacrifice" (RN 365) in separating Julien from herself, and her husband is also making a sacrifice, but his idea of sacrifice is linked with money: "M. de Rênal, voyant l'imminence du *sacrifice d'argent*, était plus au désespoir que sa femme" (RN 366, my italics). The two views of sacrifice presented in such close proximity in the novel highlight one another: the baseness and profanity of Rênal's sacrifice is underlined since it contrasts with his wife's sacrifice which is in the domain of the sacred. She becomes a "cadavre vivant" (RN 368) overcome with a death wish.

Julien is in dire need of money, and Mme de Rênal tries to convince him to accept compensation from Rênal since he previously made the "sacrifice" (RN 367) of a more remunerative position to stay with Rênal. Julien is unable to accept a gift from Rênal and considers accepting the money in the form of a loan with interest, but nevertheless, "au moment fatal d'accepter de l'argent de lui, ce *sacrifice* se trouva trop fort pour Julien. Il refusa net. M. de Rênal lui sauta au cou les larmes aux yeux" (RN 367, my italics). In moving the money from the domain of gift to a loan, Julien eliminates any possibility of forming bonds with Rênal, and in deciding against the loan, Julien rejects all forms of obligation--be they only pecuniary--with Rênal. (He decides to ask Fouqué, his friend to whom he is already bonded, for money instead.) The situation is similar in *Le père Goriot*: Vautrin changes his offer of a gift, which would entail symbolic ties, into a loan to make his money more palatable to Rastignac. The haste with which Rastignac repays the loan indicates his desire to dissociate himself from Vautrin even in the realm of the pecuniary.[26] Julien and Rastignac are similar in rejecting ties with the enemy, but Vautrin and Rênal differ as givers: Vautrin wants to give, whereas Rênal only wants to be rid of Julien forever at the least expense possible. Rênal is so overjoyed that he is spared a monetary expenditure that he has difficulty finding adequate words of praise (which cost him nothing) to write in Julien's certificate of good conduct. /

Mme de Rênal recognizes the difficulty of giving materially to Julien and shows creativity in bestowing gifts upon him indirectly through an intermediary. For example, she buys books for her sons which are really meant to bring pleasure to Julien. (She knows they are the ones he wants.) Getting the children to write their names immediately in the books is a crafty camouflage. Another example of covert gift to Julien occurs during his imprisonment; her gift becomes doubly hidden, first, because Élisa (Mme de Rênal's servant) is to give the impression that she is giving her own money, and secondly, because the jailer is to be instructed not to mention the bribe.

* * *

Mme de Rênal's love is the love of a mistress, but it is also the love of a mother: "elle avait l'illusion de l'aimer comme son enfant" (RN 308). At his trial Julien states: "Madame de Rênal avait été pour moi comme une mère" (RN 674), which no doubt is said partially as a means to protect her reputation, but it also has an element of truth.

Mme de Rênal, the mother, contemplates sacrificing herself when Stanislas, her youngest son, becomes ill; she believes her adultery is the cause and that perhaps a public confession will appease God:[27] "n'est-ce pas le plus grand

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[26] See the preceding chapter for a more detailed treatment of this incident.

[27] The belief in public humiliation as a means of redemption is seen in the preceding chapter with Véronique in *Le curé de village*. Another woman fearing God's vengeance is Mme de Malivert (A) who worries about Octave's reading of "evil" works.

sacrifice que je puisse faire à Dieu? . . . Indique-moi un autre *sacrifice* plus pénible" (RN 324, my italics). In wishing to sacrifice herself for Stanislas, she is expressing the love and duty of a mother as giver, but she indicates her love for Julien is even greater. Her crime is that her love has ventured outside "proper" social conduct, and she now loves the illegitimate more than the legitimate. In the same scene, Julien suggests that he switch from the position of a lover to that of a "brother" in order to appease God's anger. Being a "brother" would allow him to stay with Mme de Rênal in another capacity. Anthony Wilden speaks of interchangeability in a state of nature and how it is through culture that one is distinguished as sister or brother.[28] Julien would redefine himself in the social context, but Mme de Rênal indicates the impossibility of such a relationship. Rather than being linked to reason as it is for Mathilde, love for Mme de Rênal is an uncontrollable force which René Girard links to spontaneity and passion. When her husband is pounding on her bedroom door, the only way Julien can bring her back to reality (where action is possible) is through an appeal to her duty and love as a mother: "Sauve la mère de Stanislas" (RN 431). The last words of the novel: "trois[29] jours après Julien, elle mourut en embrassant ses enfants" (RN 699) recall her dedication as a mother.

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[28] Anthony Wilden, *Système et structure: Essais sur la communication et l'échange*, trans. Georges Khal (Montréal: Boréal Express, 1983) 253-54.

[29] Mme de Rênal has *three* sons, visits Julien *three* days before being ordered by Rênal to return home and dies *three* days after Julien. Stendhal's use of the number three in connection with Mme de Rênal and Julien can perhaps be seen as having a subliminal message. According to Hans Biedermann, "[i]n Hegelian dialectic, thesis and antithesis are joined by synthesis, and three is a number rich in association with perfection ['omne trium perfectum'] and mystery". (Hans Biedermann, *Dictionary of Symbolism*, trans. James Hulbert [NY: Facts on File, 1992] 241.) Numerous other examples of the number three appear. For instance, Julien, the *third* of *three* brothers, is initially offered *three* hundred francs to be a tutor. He obtains a leave of *three* days; he reflects how *three* days earlier Mme de Rênal appeared to be his when he contemplates seducing her; and he returns secretly to say farewell to Mme de Rênal after *three* days. At Strasbourg, he reflects how *three* days earlier he would have killed the abbé Castanède with pleasure; in prison, he asks for *three* glasses to share the wine given to him; and in the courtroom as well as in prison, he thinks of his execution which will occur in *three* days. The repeated use of the number three may merely be coincidental; or it could be linked to an inference of perfection concerning Julien's final sacrifice; and/or it could be a biblical allusion, such as Christ's resurrection on day *three*.

Before she meets Julien, Mme de Rênal classes all men in the same homogeneous group: "La grossièreté, et la plus brutale insensibilité à tout ce qui n'était pas intérêt d'argent, de préséance ou de croix; la haine aveugle pour tout raisonnement qui les contrariait lui parurent des choses naturelles à ce sexe" (RN 251-52). It is Julien who distinguishes himself as an outsider, an element of the heterogeneous who attracts Mme de Rênal and later captivates Mathilde: "La générosité, la noblesse d'âme, l'humanité lui semblèrent peu à peu n'exister que chez ce jeune abbé" (RN 252). Initially, she tries to convince herself that no harm will result if she steps outside the socially sanctioned sphere. This is perhaps Stendhal's effort to mark the naïveté of his character and also of her closeness to nature: "Qu'importe à mon mari les sentiments que je puis avoir pour ce jeune homme! M. de Rênal serait ennuyé des conversations que j'ai avec Julien sur des choses d'*imagination*. Lui, il pense à ses affaires. Je ne lui enlève rien pour le *donner* à Julien" (RN 279, my italics). A distinction can be drawn here between the symbolic and the imaginary (which would encompass Julien and Mme de Rênal), on the one hand, and the pecuniary and the material (which exert an influence upon Rênal), on the other. Mme de Rênal's relationship with Julien remains for the most part on an elevated level (especially near the end of the novel), even though it suffers some setbacks from outside attacks in the form of religious and social conventions. Her symbolic bonds of love with Julien contrast sharply with her ties to Rênal who has a legitimate claim as her husband. It is not because of love that Rênal resists the expulsion or murder of his wife; rather, his behaviour is determined by social and pecuniary interests: he does not want to risk the loss of the inheritance his wife is to receive from a wealthy aunt.

While Julien is to be loved, Rênal is to be feared. (Mme de Rênal's aunt warned her of the danger of confiding in a husband who is also a master.) The narrator describes the subordinate position of women during the period where, for

Mme de Rênal, her husband controls her fate.[30] Even though Mme de Rênal views her husband as a master to be feared, it does not diminish her generosity: "[e]lle eût *sacrifié* sa vie sans hésiter pour *sauver* celle de son mari" (RN 362, my italics). She cannot, however, find true happiness with a man whose position and exercise of power interfere with the establishment of bonds in a giving relationship, such as is found with Julien, particularly at the end of the novel when an almost total communion exists between them as Julien awaits execution.

It is the magnitude of Mme de Rênal's sacrifice that bridges the social gap between herself and Julien, the disparity of which Julien finds so deplorable: "La méfiance et l'orgueil souffrant de Julien, qui avait surtout besoin d'un amour à sacrifices, ne tinrent pas devant la vue d'un sacrifice si grand, si indubitable et fait à chaque instant" (RN 326). Sacrifice is a main theme in her letter to Julien in which she proposes an anonymous letter to Rênal. For a religious woman, Mme de Rênal makes a total sacrifice to Julien since she is sacrificing her soul: "que je t'ai *sacrifié* ma vie, que je te *sacrifie* mon âme. Tu sais que je te *sacrifie* bien plus. Mais [Valenod] se connaît-il en *sacrifices*, cet homme? . . . Quel bonheur pour moi de la perdre [la vie], de l'offrir en *sacrifice*, et de ne plus craindre pour mes enfants! . . . Le *sacrifice* est fait (RN 329, my italics). In singling out Valenod, who represents all that is scornful in the bourgeoisie, Mme de Rênal elevates her own sacrifice while at the same time she calls attention to the profanity of bourgeois values. In effect, at this point, she presages Julien's condemnation at the hands of this class to whom he refuses to give any pretense of respect: "sois doux, poli, point méprisant avec ces grossiers personnages . . . ils vont être les arbitres de notre sort" (RN 330).

In her letter of "éternel adieu" which Pirard intercepts, Mme de Rênal reuses the words "[l]e sacrifice est fait" (RN 385) and once again expresses the hope that God will not take his vengeance for her crime through her children. When Julien stops to see Mme de Rênal en route to Paris, she demonstrates her joy even though she has previously renounced her adultery: "Ah! mourir, mourir ainsi!" (RN 428). Sharing moments of love with Julien seems to make her life complete, and she would welcome death in exchange. She seems caught up in the same spell when Rênal is banging on her door: "Il va nous tuer tous les deux . . . je vais mourir dans tes bras, plus heureuse à ma mort que je ne le fus de la vie" (RN 430-31).

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[30] See Chapter 1 for a more expanded treatment of this theme.

In some ways Mme de Rênal spends the whole novel dying or fearing the death of her children, but when she does finally die it is like a rebirth, a union in death with Julien. Perhaps the most tragic part of her death is that she will not be a "mother" to Julien's child. (When she threatens suicide, Julien makes her renounce her intention since he does not trust Mathilde's fidelity to his interests: that is, to his child.) Mme de Rênal gives the probable cause of her death in her letter to the jurists in which she pleads against Julien's condemnation: "Bien loin de me venger, vous me donneriez la mort" (RN 669). By the end of the novel, no sacrifice seems too great if it will save Julien, and she contemplates a visit to the king to publicly proclaim that Julien is her lover. Only Julien's threats that he will refuse to see her and that he will commit suicide, should she persist, prevent her humiliating action.

* * *

After Julien's reflections about his dashed hopes due to his impending death, the narrator comments: "La mort, en elle-même, n'était pas *horrible* à ses yeux. Toute sa vie n'avait été qu'une longue préparation au malheur, et il n'avait eu garde d'oublier celui qui passe pour le plus grand de tous" (RN 647-48). The theme of sacrifice-death comes up repeatedly in connection with Julien, and it is typically linked with ideas on duty. It is "son *devoir*" (RN 265) to hold and retain

Mme de Rênal's hand, and he will shoot himself if he does not. When Mathilde initially invites him to her room, he fears a plot to murder him but goes nonetheless. Then later, when Mathilde scorns Julien, "l'idée du suicide s'offrit à lui; cette image était pleine de charmes, c'était comme un repos délicieux" (RN 558). He finally decides to go to her room a second time before killing himself. Overcome with jealousy for Croisenois, he contemplates suicide again as a way to "finir cette exécrable vie!" (RN 611). On the other hand, the suicide note he gives the marquis de La Mole to cover his murder, should the marquis decide to have him killed, is an honourable gesture, rather than any desire to die: "Qu'il me tue . . . c'est une satisfaction que je lui offre... Mais, parbleu, j'aime la vie... Je me dois à mon fils" (RN 630). The same is true about his assertion that he would not fire upon Norbert de La Mole in a duel. Mathilde's threat of her own suicide perhaps saves Julien: "S'il est mort, je mourrai, dit-elle à son père. C'est vous qui serez cause de sa mort . . . Mais . . . d'abord je prendrai le deuil, et serai publiquement *madame veuve Sorel*" (RN 631).

Julien's attempt on Mme de Rênal's life also resembles a suicide in some respects: he makes no effort to flee the scene or escape from jail and condemns himself, rather than offering a defence, when the judge visits him in prison: "J'ai *donné* la mort avec préméditation . . . je *mérite* la mort" (RN 646, my italics). A gift has been given by Julien, and others are obligated to return a gift to him; the only difference in the exchange system here is that death is not normally pursued. Moya Longstaffe discusses the numerous interpretations of why Julien shoots Mme de Rênal; these include a hypnotic state, vengeance in the name of honour and a means of having a duel with a woman. (In the case of the duel, Julien's gun shots will be met with society's punishment or with his suicide, failing the former.)[31] From Mme de Rênal's perspective, however, the assassination would be welcomed as the ultimately desirable gift: "Mourir ainsi, mais non de ma main, ce n'est point un péché . . . Dieu me pardonnera peut-être de me réjouir de ma mort. Elle n'osait ajouter: Et mourir de la main de Julien, c'est le comble des félicités" (RN 646). This "gift", of course, is not intentional on the part of Julien.

In prison Julien contemplates suicide once again:

> Si j'avais blessé à mort Mme de Rênal, je me serais tué... J'ai besoin de cette certitude pour ne pas me faire horreur à moi-même.
>
> Me tuer! voilà la grande question, se disait-il. Ces juges si formalistes, si acharnés après le pauvre accusé, qui feraient pendre le meilleur citoyen, pour accrocher la croix... Je me soustrairais à leur empire. . .
>
> Me tuer! ma foi non . . . Napoléon a vécu...
>
> D'ailleurs, la vie m'est agréable (RN 651)

While Julien outwardly expresses a rejection of suicide, his conduct can be seen as the opposite. He calls the members of the jury "des bourgeois indignés" (RN 675) who see him as "un paysan qui s'est révolté contre la bassesse de sa fortune" (RN 674). According to Julien, they want to punish him as an example to others who would infringe upon the territory of the bourgeois. M. le baron de Valenod's vengeance, which underlies the jury's verdict, serves to highlight the veracity of Julien's words: the perfidy and lack of nobility of this "elite" segment of parvenus is clear. M. de Frilair, who previously considered the possibility of making Julien appear a martyr, views Julien's court presentation as a suicidal act: "Quelle idée a eue votre ami . . . d'aller réveiller et attaquer la petite vanité de cette *aristocratie bourgeoise*! Pourquoi parler de *caste*? . . . Cet intérêt de caste est venu masquer à leurs yeux l'horreur de condamner à mort. . . . sa mort sera une sorte de *sucide*" (RN 686). Although Moya Longstaffe rejects the idea that Julien commits suicide, she does see him as a martyr who shoots Mme de Rênal in an effort to render himself worthy of her.[32]

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[31] Moya Longstaffe, "L'éthique du duel et la couronne du martyr dans *Le rouge et le noir*," *Stendhal Club* 72 (1976): 283-306.

Sacrificing his life takes a great deal of courage because Julien does not always regard death fearlessly; for example, his fear is evident when he is confronted by the ugly image of death he sees in the aging Chélan. One of the reasons for his refusal to appe[illegible]s that he does not know if he will have the courage to die later in a dignified manner. Another example of these sentiments is to be found when he meets with the hypocritical priest, who is trying to make personal gains through the exploitation of Julien's situation. During this meeting, Julien thinks of his rotting body.

* * *

H.-F. Imbert presents a convincing argument for a comparison between Julien, "le fils du charpentier" (an expression repeated in various forms around twenty times in *Le rouge et le noir*), and Jesus.[33] To his list of love, renouncement, poverty, scorn for monetary worship, sacrifice, etc., Imbert could add that each, although called the son of a carpenter, is supposed to be the son of another who is situated at the summit of the hierarchy. In *Le bouc émissaire*, René Girard argues that forces within a group act to ostracize and sacrifice any elements which deviate from the norm: "*La victime est un bouc émissaire*. . . . Bouc émissaire désigne simultanément l'innocence des victimes, la polarisation collective qui s'effectue contre elles et la finalité collective de cette polarisation. Les persécuteurs s'enferment dans la 'logique' de la représentation persécutrice et ils ne peuvent plus en sortir."[34] Julien appears to provide an example of this. His father gladly expels the weakling outside the family group to go work for Rênal, and his two jealous brothers beat him so severely that Mme de Rênal believes him to be dead. At the seminary, Julien is again ostracized since it is obvious to the seminarists that he disdains their idea of happiness: eating well and having warm winter clothes. As Julien reflects: "Ma présomption s'est si souvent applaudie de ce que j'étais différent des autres jeunes paysans! Eh bien, j'ai assez vécu pour voir que *différence engendre haine*" (RN 393).[35] Julien is like "une brebis galeuse" (RN 394) who is nicknamed "MARTIN LUTHER" (RN 395) because of his logic.

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[32] Longstaffe 298, 306.

[33] Imbert 581-82.

[34] Girard, *Bouc* 62.

Three gifts given to Julien function to eliminate the hatred of the other seminarists towards him. The first is the position of Old and New Testament repeater from Pirard; the second, wild game from Fouqué; and the third, the works of Tacitus from the bishop. All three of these gifts elevate Julien to a higher group which thus eliminates the necessity to ostracize him due to his evident superiority. The second gift is especially indicative of the obsequious homage to be paid money: "Ce don, qui classait la famille de Julien dans la partie de la société qu'*il faut respecter*, porta un coup mortel à l'envie. Il fut *une supériorité consacrée par la fortune*. . . . il ne les avait pas avertis de *la fortune* de ses parents, et les avait ainsi exposés à *manquer de respect à l'argent*" (RN 404, my italics). Pirard says that Julien deserves his gift, and relative to his gift, the bishop explains his reasons for giving: "je cherche le moyen de vous remercier de la soirée aimable que vous m'avez procurée . . . Je ne m'attendais pas à trouver un docteur dans un élève de mon séminaire. Quoique le don ne soit pas trop canonique, je veux vous donner un Tacite" (RN 412). These gifts, given by honourable men as a recognition of merit, take on a distorted role due to the perspective of the other seminarists and the corrupt abbé Castanède: they serve as a signal of Julien's favour with those in positions of power. (The respect shown Julien is especially increased after the consideration shown by the bishop.) Julien recognizes that he is shown respect, not for his personal merit, but because of what the others hope to gain and "leur bassesse lui causa du dégoût" (RN 414).

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[35] Pirard later expresses the same sentiment in warning Julien to beware of the marquis de La Mole's servants: "ils verront en vous un égal, mis injustement au-dessus d'eux. Sous les dehors de la bonhomie, des bons conseils, du désir de vous guider, ils vont essayer de vous faire tomber dans quelque grosse balourdise" (RN 445). Pirard himself, who is a virtuous Jansenist of the highest integrity, is the victim of the corrupt, irreligious, power-seeking Jesuits. Chélan is another respectable, worthy Jansenist who falls prey to pecuniary interests and loses his position after a lifetime of dutiful devotion.

Julien is also the *bouc émissaire* of the aristocratic bourgeoisie because (as already discussed) he is the peasant parvenu who must be eliminated. Girard describes him as "la victime . . . des bourgeois enrichis et jaloux qui vont triompher en juillet."[36] Similarities exist between the outsider Lopez, described by Girard, and Julien: "Le médecin juif d'Elisabeth d'Angleterre, Lopez, fut exécuté . . . au moment où il jouissait du plus grand prestige . . . Au moindre échec, à la moindre dénonciation, le parvenu peut tomber d'autant plus bas qu'il est monté plus haut."[37] Lopez and Julien are strangers to the group, rise to great heights, and then are victimized. The decision of the separate jurists to follow Valenod's lead can be attributed to Girard's "esprit grégaire . . . qui fait du troupeau, justement, un troupeau, autrement dit la tendance irrésistible au mimétisme."[38] The determination of whether Julien lives or dies appears to rest with the Valenod group, but the young man causes an inversion of power when he refuses to allow them the opportunity to give him clemency. Again a comparable analysis of what is happening can be found in Girard's writing since Julien emerges as hero: "l'effet du bouc émissaire invertit complètement les rapports entre les persécuteurs et leur victime, et c'est cette inversion qui produit le sacré. . . . Elle fait de la victime, en réalité passive, la seule cause agissante et toute-puissante face à un groupe qui se tient lui-même pour entièrement agi."[39] When Julien earlier falls from his horse in the rue du Bac and then bravely rides through the busy place Louis XVI, risking being killed, it can be taken as a foreshadowing; he may encounter obstacles amongst the ultras, but they will not be the cause of his demise. Norbert, however, gives a hint that if Julien should fall, he will be mercilessly trodden upon rather than saved.

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[36] Girard, *Mensonge* 134.
[37] Girard, *Bouc* 73.
[38] Girard, *Bouc* 268.
[39] Girard, *Bouc* 68.

Another example of a *bouc émissaire* is found in Galope-chopine, in *Les chouans*. Although the peasants appear solidly united behind the royalist cause, much basic mistrust exists within the group. (For example, when the usurer, d'Orgemont, pretends to tell them where his money is hidden, the Chouans look at each other in an attempt to decide who can be trusted to go get it.) Pille-miche and Marche-à-terre feel forced to execute Galope-chopine: they believe he has betrayed the *gars* and thus the social interests of the group.[40] Nonetheless, bonds still exist, and the executioners clearly have feeling for the victim: Marche-à-terre promises to look after his son, and Pille-miche promises to confess Galope-chopine's sins to a priest and to do any required penance to gain his absolution. Nevertheless, compromise is not possible when the security of the group is threatened, and the sacrifice must be made. Galope-chopine's wife, on the other hand, would ostracize herself from the group and make a gift of her son to the republicans--a gift made with vengeance in mind: "je te voue aux Bleus. Tu seras soldat pour venger ton père. Tue, tue les *Chuins* . . . Ah! ils ont pris la tête de mon homme, je vais donner celle du Gars aux Bleus" (C 1179). Any loyalty to the royalist cause has been transformed into an energy to be used against it.

A group also takes action against an individual in *La rabouilleuse* when Max is stabbed by Fario as a reprisal for his destructive tricks. (Max, who is far more a persecutor than a victim, finally withdraws his accusation, but the incident has been so tense that Joseph and Agathe leave, and thus what Fario intended as a vengeful punishment becomes inverted into a welcome gift from Max's perspective: he is finally delivered from the gift-seeking relatives.) The mob seems pushed to find someone to punish for the crime, and Joseph Bridau, the outsider "[qui] portait bien le crime sur sa figure" (R 462), is selected for the sacrifice. Julien Sorel and Joseph Bridau fit Girard's mythical mould as victims both by their physical characteristics and by being strangers. Julien is from the "exceptionnellement beaux"[41] and Joseph the opposite: "[L]a mythologie . . . va de préférence aux extrêmes."[42] Girard writes of "la polarisation persécutrice . . . *l'étranger* collectivement chassé ou assassiné . . . La victime est un homme qui vient d'ailleurs, un étranger de marque."[43] When the group sees Joseph's guilt in his physical features, Girard's analysis continues to hold: "Monstruosité physique et monstruosité morale sont plaquées l'une sur l'autre dans des mythes qui justifient la persécution."[44] The angry mob, an overt hostile force, represents society's covert antagonistic actions that are taken throughout the novel against Joseph, the artist. Victor Brombert offers an insightful perspective by attributing a positive value to persecution: "Hostility produces estrangement, but it forces the individual, through separateness, into the discovery and affirmation of his independent self. . . . It is easy to see how such a separateness can be simultaneously a source of suffering and a fecund principle of pride and self-affirmation."[45] This applies to Julien Sorel and Joseph Bridau who seem to develop an inner energy to resist the forces opposing them and to become even more convinced of their own superiority.

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[40] According to Randall Collins's analysis of the Simmel/Coser theory on conflict, "CONFLICT PROMOTES SOCIAL INTEGRATION." (Randall Collins, *Theoretical Sociology* [NY: Harcourt, 1988] 120.) This appears to hold true amongst the Chouans, who are united against the republicans. Any attack on the group's unity comes in the form of interference from pecuniary interests; for example, although Galope-chopine has not betrayed the *gars*, he has accepted money from the opposition.

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[41] Girard, *Bouc* 50.

[42] Girard, *Bouc* 50.

[43] Girard, *Bouc* 50.

[44] Girard, *Bouc* 55.

[45] Victor Brombert, *Stendhal: Fiction and the Themes of Freedom* (NY: Random House, 1968) 87.

Whereas Julien Sorel is excluded from the nobility because of his birth, in *Armance*, Octave de Malivert, a misfit in the caste into which he was born, expels himself. The narrator describes him as misanthropic, and his uncle the commander de Soubirane sees him as Lucifer incarnated. Since he is not only impotent sexually but socially as well, he does not share his father's enthusiasm for the law of indemnity by which the family will receive money through his mother:

> L'impression d'Octave fut tout à la fois de déplaisance et de mépris. Il se voyait mieux accueilli *à cause de l'espérance de deux millions* dans la société de Paris et du monde où il était reçu avec le plus d'intimité. . . . Je suis donc si peu aimé, se disait-il, que deux millions changent tous les sentiments qu'on avait pour moi; au lieu de chercher à mériter d'être aimé, j'aurais dû chercher à m'enrichir par quelque commerce (A 39)

In connection with the money, he experiences joy only in fantasizing about a fabulous salon which he will have built and that he alone will enter. Whereas the Bonnivets' salon represents the epitome of superficial social interaction, Octave's (through its exclusion of all others) will afford an opportunity for inner communion and introspection, a search for a deeper, hidden meaning. Although Octave will be the only person allowed entry into the room, he will not truly be alone; the three large mirrors he plans to install represent the symbolic presence of another.

When Octave receives the anonymous gift of a Bible, he shows a disbelief that the present is linked to true religion: "C'est apparemment depuis la loi d'indemnité que je suis devenu digne que l'on s'occupe de mon salut et de l'influence que je puis avoir un jour" (A 50). The idea of an "interested" as opposed to an altruistic gift becomes more apparent since it is discovered that the Bible probably comes from Mme de Bonnivet: she has a need for power and wants to establish a mystical new religion with Octave as its saint Paul. If Octave had considered a monastic style of life, it is for the solitude he would hope to find there, rather than for any deep religious beliefs on his part. That the "magnifique exemplaire de la Bible, relié par Thouvenin" (A 50) is linked to the market, rather than having religious or symbolic meaning, becomes more evident later when it is a question of another "livre magnifique": "Un ouvrier de Thouvenin magnifiquement payé . . . revêtit d'une reliure superbe le roman où l'on employait l'artifice de fabriquer des lettres" (A 180). This is the book which the chevalier de Bonnivet, the guiding force behind Soubirane's perfidious actions, presents to the commander in his continuing effort to prevent Octave's marriage to Armance. The young Bonnivet is supposedly religious, but he shows the opposite in his desire for vengeance because Armance prefers Octave over himself.

In an attempt to please his mother, Octave frequents the society of the nobility, but his acceptance by them results from the role he plays and the masking of his true sentiments. When he decides to pursue Mme d'Aumale, he appears in the woods at night disguised as a magician, which Armand Hoog considers: "Merveilleuse rêverie de transmutation! Le magicien est moins celui qui change les choses que celui qui se transforme lui-même."[46] Octave does, in effect, express a desire to be other than what he is: "j'ai soif de l'*incognito*. . . . J'éprouve un besoin impérieux de voir agir un autre vicomte de Malivert" (A 107). The direction of his movement is generally downward in society but tied to action, whether it be commander of a canon or steam engine, chemist, mathematics instructor or Pierre Gerlat, the servant of some young man, such as himself. Hoog's analysis gives the last alternative an added advantage: "En devenant le Gerlat d'un autre Malivert, Octave conserverait la surveillance de sa personne, tout en jouissant d'une identité nouvelle, purifiée des stigmates de la connaissance."[47] It is not possible for the vicomte de Malivert to occupy any of these positions, and thus a type of "death" must occur whereby the vicomte steps aside: "il faudrait s'appeler M. Martin et M. Lenoir" (A 104) or Pierre Gerlat. (Octave earlier shows a propensity to invert the social hierarchy when he becomes his servant's servant after throwing him out the window.)

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[46] Armand Hoog, préface, *Armance,* par Stendhal (Paris: Gallimard, 1975) 33.
[47] Hoog 33.

The theme of death, in effect, traverses *Armance* as it does *Le rouge et le noir*. It is while he reflects about an exception to the degradation of society that Octave narrowly misses being crushed by a carriage: "Dieu! que n'ai-je été anéanti! . . . d'où vient cette obstination à vivre? . . . Qu'est-ce que la mort? se dit-il en ouvrant la caisse de ses pistolets et les considérant. Bien peu de chose en vérité; il faut être fou pour s'en passer" (A 42-43). In his discussions with Armance, Octave states that either a person must kill himself or take life gaily--Octave's problem is that he takes life too seriously. When he finally becomes conscious of his love for Armance, he wants to end his life because of that love; however, he is prevented from killing himself at this point due to his love. (His suicide would compromise Armance.) Burying his purse, a gift from Armance, on the spot where he fainted thinking about her, is a symbolic farewell to the woman he loves. He shows his love in his attachment to the gift and in his willingness to part with it, which represents an eternal separation made out of love: "il avait du plaisir à sentir sous ses doigts chacune des petites perles d'acier . . . il se permit de donner un baiser à la bourse, présent d'Armance . . . Adieu, adieu, pour la vie, chère Armance!" (A 117). While he is returning home, his fascination with death continues as he contemplates the pleasure of being killed by a child's stray bullet; given the opportunity before expiring, he would thank the child for having killed him. When he encounters Armance, his lie to her about his absence of love is meant as a type of gift, as a way to protect her from being hurt by the monster that he sees in himself.

It is only after his duel with Crêveroche, happily believing he is dying, that Octave permits himself to write to Armance and to speak somewhat freely of his love saying it is greater than any paternal affection. When Octave uses blood from his wounds as ink in his letter to Armance and in his testament after the duel, he is literally, as well as spiritually, putting himself into what he writes. Difficult though it may be for Armance, she finally burns the letter after copying it, but it is like the cremation of a body whose ashes are held in reverence: "Jamais sacrifice ne fut plus pénible; il fallait donc se séparer de tout ce qui lui resterait d'Octave; . . . elle en recueillit les cendres précieusement" (A 138). Later as death seems more imminent, Octave becomes more explicit: "Chère Armance . . . je vais mourir; ce moment a quelques privilèges . . . je meurs comme j'ai vécu, en vous aimant avec passion; et la mort m'est douce, parce qu'elle me permet de vous faire cet aveu" (A 140). It seems that only nearness to death allows him to drop his defences and to stop playing a role. Before the duel, rather than showing fear or abhorrence, he hopes that he will die: "la mort était pour lui le premier des bonheurs" (A 132). The same death wish is demonstrated by his joy and smile when the doctor tells him the odds are against his survival.

Although Octave survives the wounds of the duel, he is only to be plunged once more into the pursuit of death. He might have found a life of happiness with Armance, but the pecuniary in the form of his uncle interferes. The latter, who wants to prevent the marriage to secure funds for market investments, makes sure a letter he has counterfeited, which is supposedly from Armance to her girl friend, falls into Octave's hands. The young man who has so often played a role himself takes the false, in which Armance is seen no longer to love him, for the true. The real situation is that Armance loves him dearly, but Octave takes her expression of love for him as acting and loves her too much to confront her. He resolves to sacrifice himself in order to give to Armance: "il ne me reste qu'à mourir. . . . je puis la laisser libre dans un mois. Elle sera une veuve jeune, riche, fort belle, sans doute fort recherchée; et le nom de Malivert lui vaudra mieux pour trouver un *mari amusant* que le nom encore peu connu de Zohiloff" (A 183). It is only in face of his impending death that he is able to write to her and give his explanations; and it is an acknowledgment of her superior understanding of Octave when the narrator says that she alone suspected his death as a suicide.

* * *

Octave gives up his life for Armance, and she too shows herself capable of sacrifice for him on different occasions. When she fears Octave will guess by her behaviour that she loves him, she resolves to make the sacrifice of withdrawing to a convent to preserve her honour. As she makes a symbolic step in that direction by having her room stripped of all ornamentation to render it like a convent cell, two objects capture her attention. One is an engraving, a gift from Mme de Malivert chosen by Octave. The gift is valuable to her because it is linked to Octave, but it is precisely because of this tie that she cannot retain it. Rather than discard it with her other possessions, she expresses a desire to preserve its existence by passing the gift on to another. The second item of concern is the blue wall paper that seems to keep her thoughts clinging to Octave's world as the paper does to the walls. She fabricates the story of her impending marriage in order to restore her esteem in Octave's eyes and in order to eliminate the necessity of exiling herself to a convent where she would be forever separated from him.

Her whole existence and happiness are bound to Octave. The day he announces that he will not marry for six years, she anticipates the joy of this period and "[l']espoir de la mort" (A 81) upon its completion. When she discovers that others think she is feigning love for Octave because of his money, her thoughts turn again to a withdrawal from life. Octave believes he will liberate Armance by his suicide, and he even encourages her to hasten her re-entry into life by stipulating that she must remarry within twenty months of his death or forfeit the inheritance. He has, however, misread Armance: he sacrifices himself to give her life, but instead he gives her a kind of living death since without him life loses meaning for his wife and mother, who make a symbolic sacrifice to his memory.

Armance and Mme de Malivert are not strongly attached to money. If anything, Armance is distanced from Octave by his money, feeling it a sign that she is socially unworthy of him. At one point, she does wish she were rich, but it is with the thought that this would have enabled her to marry Octave and bring him happiness. She is little touched when she does inherit money; her sadness is augmented further by Mme de Bonnivet's harsh words spoken out of jealousy because of what she perceives as Armance's preference for Mme de Malivert and Octave. The gift which increases the young woman's independence is viewed unfavourably by Mme de Bonnivet who liked the security of Armance's subordination to her. Previously Mme de Bonnivet could receive glory by giving to her poor relative,[48] but this route is now closed, and she risks losing her pretty young companion who sits on her *little* chair, near the *great* marquise whose gifts are neither given to an equal nor with the intent of establishing equality.

Armance is 18 when the story unfolds in 1827 which puts her year of birth at 1808 or 1809. She would have few, if any, clear memories of her parents because at her mother's death in 1811 (followed shortly thereafter by her father's) she would have been three years old at most. There are constant reminders in the text that she is an orphan, and kindly Mme de Malivert would appear a suitable "mother". Armance does, in fact, become her "daughter", but what really unites them in the same "family" is their common love for Octave. Once again, as shown in the preceding chapter, the parent's preference for the legitimate child is clear.

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[48] For example, the narrator uses the word *sacrifier* three times in the space of six lines in describing what society feels Armance owes to Mme de Bonnivet (A 63).

Mme de Malivert puts Octave's happiness ahead of anything else in choosing Armance to be his wife: "de toi dépend le bonheur de mon fils" (A 93); "Conserver la raison de mon fils, n'est-ce pas mon premier devoir?" (A 95). She calls them "ses enfants" (A 151), yet inequality exists as the "mother" would have the "daughter" sacrifice herself for the son. Only once does she seem to put her "daughter's" interests ahead of Octave's: "ma fille, je ne veux pas te rendre malheureuse, tout peut se rompre encore" (A 184). Even then, after Armance's reassurance, she announces that she intends to marry them in eight days which gives Armance little time to change her mind.

Mme de Malivert, who typically puts her son's personal well-being ahead of all else, contrasts sharply with her husband. He would preserve her diamonds because of the wealth they represent, whereas she would sell them in an attempt to bring joy to Octave. She, in fact, does exchange two diamonds in secret to buy a horse for her son, and she plans to leave the rest of them in her testament on condition that he use the revenue from them to keep a horse. This is the effort of a mother to will happiness to her child. She even considers selling all of her diamonds immediately to obtain funds to invite people and thus end Octave's isolation. (He indicates the futility of this gesture by saying that she is the only one he loves.) As well, when her husband enthusiastically announces the money that will be coming due to the law of indemnity, she annoys Malivert by turning her interest instead to Octave's health .

The divergence of their perspectives surfaces again in the choice of a spouse for their son. Mlle de Zohiloff has inherited sufficient money, but the marquis de Malivert opposes Octave's marriage to her because no family connections will be gained. He has grandiose plans for Octave which will be precluded by his union with Armance: "Ce mariage-ci n'en fera qu'un bourgeois . . . elle fortifiera ses habitudes bourgeoises, et par ce mariage vous abîmez notre famille" (A 169). Whereas the mother wants to ensure the son's happiness, the father is interested in the preservation of the family's glory; there is a limit, however, to the extent to which he would go. The narrator describes him as a tender nineteenth-century father who generously gives Octave money to travel to Greece to fight even though he would rather have a less heroic son: "Tu me perces le coeur, dit le bon vieillard . . . Prends . . . et plaise à Dieu que ce ne soit pas le dernier argent que je te donne!" (A 122).

Mme de Malivert's efforts to give Armance to Octave not only serve to emphasize her love for her son, but they also highlight the value that she attributes to the young woman whom Octave has always admired. A stranger to society by more than her Russian heritage of which multiple reminders are included in the text, she (as well as Octave) is distinguished as different. As Octave remarks: "elle seule ici est étrangère à ce redoublement d'intérêt que je dois à de l'argent, elle seule ici a quelque noblesse d'âme" (A 40). His love for Armance swells to the point that he feels he loves only her and that he no longer loves his mother. In his two wills he does, in effect, show preference for Armance, but his mother is not forgotten either. In the first, he leaves everything to Armance as "ma reconnaissance pour les soins que je suis sûr qu'elle donnera à ma mère" (A 136). Although it is perhaps a camouflage to cover his true sentiments towards Armance, he is really giving the only two people he has ever loved to one another. In his final will, his mother is to receive everything if Armance does not remarry within the stipulated time. Since they enter a convent together, it can be assumed that Mme de Malivert does receive everything Octave left; included is the companionship of Armance, who demonstrates her fidelity to Octave and lack of interest in the pecuniary by not remarrying.

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In *Les chouans ou la Bretagne en 1799,* the theme of sacrifice is found again in that a group of people is prepared to die to restore the king who is in exile; to a great extent, however, they are fighting for personal gain. It is their belief that God is on their side and that they will be given eternal salvation: their spiritual leader, the abbé Gudin, blesses their guns and preaches that all will be pardoned in this holy war. Killing the republicans (the *Bleus*) is condoned in the name of religion, and those on the republican side are considered irreligious. The abbé Gudin speaks harshly to his nephew in an effort to get him to quit the republican army: "tu perds ton âme! . . . Je te déshérite!" (C 950). Although this would indicate an eternal rupture, the nephew is later saddened by his death because he still believes in the basic goodness of his uncle and the force of family bonds: "C'était mon seul parent, et, malgré ses malédictions, il m'aimait. Le Roi revenu, tout le pays aurait voulu ma tête, le bonhomme m'aurait caché sous sa soutane" (C 1171).

Francine, Marie de Verneuil's maid, is neutral in the war between the royalists and republicans. Compelled by an obligation to Marie because of her generous gifts, Francine remains loyal and calls upon Marche-à-terre to defend her mistress. Marche-à-terre initially indicates more is to be gained by following his current course: "l'énumération de ses trésors échouèrent devant l'impénétrable expression de Marche-à-terre. . . . Chaque Bleu jeté par terre vaut une indulgence" (C 998). It can be seen as an opposition between material and spiritual gain, but it is more likely closer to an argument raised to resist helping someone on the opposite side in the war. Francine progresses in her pleading for aid for Marie from "ma bienfaitrice" to "la tienne" to "notre bienfaitrice" (C 1042-43). With the last possessive, Francine is reminding Marche-à-terre of their attachments to one another through love, and it is out of love for Francine that Marche-à-terre agrees to help Marie.

When Mme du Gua gives Marie to Pille-miche, she is inflicting a more complete vengeance than a summary execution would be: "Pille-miche, emporte-la . . . c'est ma part du butin, je te la donne, fais-en tout ce que tu voudrais" (C 1052). In changing Marie de Verneuil's status from a member of the nobility worthy of respect to an object ready for disposition, Mme du Gua sets the stage for Marche-à-terre to enter into negotiations:

> [Pille-miche:] --la grande garce m'a donné la femme, et tout ce qui est à elle est à *mé*.
> [Marche-à-terre:] --Bon pour la voiture, tu en feras des sous; mais la femme? alle [sic] te sautera au visage comme un chat. . . . Je t'achète tout ton butin. . . . Laisse-la moi voir, je te dirai un prix. . . . veux-tu trente livres de bonne rente? . . . Tope . . .
> --Oh! je tope, il y a de quoi avoir des Bretonnes avec ça (C 1057-58)

For Pille-miche, Marie is an object which he gladly sells because the price is right, and he indicates the absence of value he attaches to her life with his: "*boutons-la* dans l'étang avec une pierre au cou, et partageons les cent écus" (C 1058). Marche-à-terre shrewdly leaves Marie in the realm of commodities because admitting his true reasons for his interest in her might increase the price to be paid or even prevent the deal. As it is, he must raise the payment when Marie tells them about the money in the coach: " 'Je te *donne* les cent écus dans ma part de la rançon de d'Orgemont', s'écria Marche-à-terre en étouffant un grognement causé par ce *sacrifice*" (C 1058, my italics). What Marche-à-terre gives Pille-miche functions to show his affection for Francine: Marie changes from an object given out of vengeance by Mme du Gua to Pille-miche, to a commodity in a market transaction between the two Chouans, to a gift made out of love from Marche-à-terre to Francine. From Marche-à-terre's perspective, their obligation to Francine's mistress has been fulfilled: "nous sommes quittes avec cette femme-là, viens avec moi et que le diable l'emporte" (C 1059); for Francine, however, the relationship is deeper. Bonds formed through gift exchange between these two characters, who live "quasiment comme deux soeurs" (C 1042), have a distinct permanency, and Francine will not abandon her "sister" in a time of need.

The state of war which exists in *Les Chouans* stands in clear contrast to the peace reflected in a society built on gift, such as the one described by Mauss. Instead of giving, the action, which could be described as anti-Maussian, centres largely around taking. At times when something is given, the motivating force is, in fact, vengeance rather than the desire to establish bonds. (An example of this would be Galope-chopine's wife who gives her son to the republicans with the hope that he will avenge her husband's death.) At other times, the gift seems given in a calculated effort to achieve a goal; for example, Corentin would place Marie in a state of obligation to himself for all he has given to her: "je préfère votre bonheur au mien. . . . J'ai espéré vous conquérir à force de soumission et de dévouement, . . . mais *vous n'avez voulu me récompenser de rien*" (C 1153, my italics); Marie, however, rejects subjugation to him because of the odiousness of his character and because of the undertakings in which he has involved her. Whereas Marie would prefer to remove herself from the political struggle and leave events up to God, Corentin is an opportunist who would support the Bourbons or the republic depending on which is most advantageous to him at the time: "Trahir la France est encore un de ces scrupules que, nous autres gens supérieurs, laissons aux sots" (C 1154). It is the presence of characters such as Corentin in the novel that makes Montauran, whose motto is "*Persévérer jusqu'à la mort*" (C 1061), even more honourable and courageous.

* * *

The marquis de Montauran, a man of honour, distinguishes himself to Marie as the comte Altamira does to Mathilde. Marie sees in "son amant un homme de caractère, un homme condamné à mort qui venait jouer lui-même sa tête et faire la guerre à la République" (C 1014). He is, indeed, a purist who is prepared to sacrifice himself and has no desire for personal profit whereas the others (the exceptions are the baron de Guénic and Brigaut) demand to be rewarded with positions, titles or pensions; they see themselves as giving and the king as under an obligation to give in return. As one puts it: "je risque ma vie pour la bonne cause, . . . mais toute peine mérite salaire" (C 1127), and as another adds to the marquis: "vous traitez trop légèrement des hommes qui ont quelque droit à la reconnaissance de celui que vous représentez ici" (C 1127). The marquis, who has letters from the king that authorize what they want, shows his disdain for their mercenary attitude: "Le jeune chef . . . *jeta* les lettres dans le *feu*, où elles furent *consumées* en un clin d'oeil. 'Je ne veux plus commander . . . qu'à ceux qui verront un Roi dans le Roi, et non une proie à dévorer. Vous êtes libres, messieurs, de m'abandonner...' " (C 1130, my italics). The words *jeta*, *feu* and *consumées* recall once again Bataille's liberating energy brought about through destruction as opposed to accumulation. The result of Montauran's noble action is that all assert their allegiance to this heroic, devoted individual whose giving serves as an example. Although Montauran seeks no return on his own gift to the king and chastises those who do, he would reward those who show his altruistic devotion, calling upon Mme du Gua to ensure this is done in the event of his death: "Si vous voyez la Restauration, n'oubliez ni ce brave homme ni le baron du Guénic. Il y a plus de dévouement en eux que dans tous ces gens-là" (C 1130).

Montauran's honourability is as apparent as Hulot's when they voice opposition to the pillage that is carried out by their followers who feel a justified claim to the loot. In both scenes, an ironic twist to the thievery occurs. For Mme du Gua on the royalist side, it turns out to be "le pillage de son propre argent" (C 953) since she unknowingly condones the theft and sharing of money that her mother sent her; and she thus unwittingly passes on the gift. For Gudin on the republican side, the money stolen and offered to him as a gift belonged to the abbé

Gudin; it is therefore actually his own money--and not a gift from outside the family circle--since his uncle had not carried out his threats to disinherit him.

Another indication of honour occurs when Montauran gives his glove (which serves as a symbol of his inviolable protection) to the republican Merle as a passport to protect him from the Chouans. It does not save Merle's life when he goes to help Marie, but this "sacred" item does prevent him from being stripped by Pille-miche, his assassin. It is Marche-à-terre who takes the glove from the dead Merle and gives it in turn to Marie as a safeguard. Marie uses it later when she goes out into the countryside in search of the marquis and also to obtain Galope-chopine as a guide to the Chouans' ball at Saint-James. Montauran's gift to a third party, which is passed along, thus acts as a force in reuniting him with his lover.

Montauran is a highly noble character, and yet his promises at times prove meaningless; for example, he gives his word that no harm will come to Marie and the republican soldiers but then changes his mind. When he falls in love saying: "Marie, ma vie est à vous" (C 1036), she refuses the gift because of the circumstances, but he insists: "--Comment, vous me quittez au moment où je vous offre ma vie!... --Vous l'offrez dans un moment de passion, de désir. --Sans regret, et pour toujours" (C 1036). Despite the sincerity of the marquis and his love for Marie, he does nothing to prevent the massacre of the republican troops nor her abduction by Pille-miche: Marie has been degraded from Mlle de Verneuil of the nobility to a prostitute sent as a mercenary with the mission to kill him. He feels that he has been duped and that the preservation of his honour requires vengeance.

* * *

Marie also puts vengeance ahead of love when her honour is in question. Initially, it appears that love dominates her actions: she has been sent to Bretagne to seduce Montauran and thus be able to aid in his capture, but at the inn, she saves the marquis out of love. On the way to Vivetière, she spares him once more out of love but also out of admiration for his prowess: "ravie d'être insultée par cet homme au moment où elle en tenait la vie entre ses mains, elle lui dit à l'oreille, en riant avec une douce malice: 'Vous avez une trop mauvaise tête, les bourreaux n'en voudront pas, je la garde' " (C 1025). However, when Montauran does nothing in her defence, despite Mme du Gua's humiliating treatment of her in front of everyone, a desire to retaliate surges within her because her honour must be restored: "je comprends aujourd'hui qu'on puisse mourir pour se venger. . . . il disait m'aimer, et il n'a pas résisté à la plus légère des épreuves. . . . si l'univers l'avait accusé, je l'aurais défendu" (C 1064-65). Marie's desire for vengeance drives her to the opposite end of the scale from the anonymous giver; she becomes the anonymous taker of life and appeals to Hulot to hide her treachery to make her vengeance complete: "faites en sorte que rien ne trahisse ma trahison, et qu'il meure convaincu de ma fidélité" (C 1066). Her love, although very strong, is also extremely selfish: "s'il ne doit plus m'aimer, je veux le tuer, aucune femme ne l'aura" (C 1089).

Marie oscillates between attempts to save the marquis, when she believes he loves and respects her, and schemes to have him captured, when she feels betrayed. For example, at one point she is willing to sacrifice marriage to him for a more courageous route: "La vertu me pèse. Je vous mépriserais si vous aviez la faiblesse de m'épouser. . . . soyez digne de votre avenir et quittez-moi sans regret. . . . Je vous sacrifie honneur et fortune. L'orgueil que me donne ce sacrifice me soutiendra dans ma misère . . . Je ne vous livrerai jamais" (C 1146). (A similar scene in which Marie refuses marriage is repeated later.) She also begs Corentin to help her save Montauran no matter what the price: "Âme de boue . . . Je veux le sauver au prix de tout mon sang. Parle, que te faut-il? . . . si vous voulez que je vous aime, Corentin, aidez-moi à le sauver" (C 1187). Then after reading what she is tricked into believing is a love letter from Montauran to Mme du Gua in which he mocks her, she demonstrates her desire for vengeance again in an attempt to turn him over to the republicans. At the end of the novel, both love and honour are preserved as the two young lovers sacrifice their lives for one another. Montauran risks his life by coming to marry Marie and is killed; she is shot disguised as the marquis in an effort to divert attention and give him a better chance to escape. Their love and honour is accentuated by the treachery of Corentin, the unethical opportunist who orchestrates their death.

Part of Marie's nobility as a character is developed through scenes that highlight her lack of attachment to money. One scene involves miserly old d'Orgemont whom she rescues from the Chouans. Rather than expressing gratitude, he indicates a concern that she will expect a return for her kindness and heads off any requests for remuneration by pointing out that he in turn has saved her from Mme du Gua: "je vous ai remboursé intégralement le service que vous m'avez rendu; donc, je ne vois pas pourquoi je vous donnerais" (C 1086); however, Marie interrupts him with "je ne vous demande rien" (C 1086). The old miser attempts to draw Marie into his gift-giving circle by proposing marriage to him as "une excellente spéculation": "Une jeune fille comme vous doit aimer les diamants, les bijoux, les équipages, l'or" (C 1088), but Marie refuses: "l'argent . . . n'est rien pour moi" (C 1088). D'Orgemont's continuing attraction to the young woman can be seen when he gives her money to use as bribes to safeguard her passage back home; his miserly side surfaces, however, when the gift becomes a loan which is to be repaid. From his perspective, the loan is a gift because he charges her no interest. As the prospect of marriage wanes, Marie is slowly excluded from the gift circle, passing to the perimeter, but she is still in contact with the gift sphere in the usurer's opinion as he shows in his surprise at offering to loan her money in the future at a reduced rate. Lewis Hyde lists usury as one of the ways "of stabilizing peoples . . . who do not trust each other."[49] In a group based on gift exchange, people are confident that what they give will be returned to them, whether directly or indirectly, and at the very least no loss to the group will occur (that is, what is given will remain within the group). The idea of risk is absent in such a situation: people trust that the gift will continue to circulate within the boundaries of the group. When basic trust is eliminated, preventing the gift from flowing freely, usury is introduced to fill the void created. The documentation or collateral, or both, that may accompany usury facilitate transactions between parties that otherwise would not occur. Usury thus covers the perceived risk once faith that the gift will be returned is destroyed. By reducing the rate of usury, d'Orgemont indicates that he is still clinging to the hope of entering into a relationship of trust and love with Marie; the trust, nevertheless, remains minimal since the marriage would be preceded by a formal legal contract. D'Orgemont's inability to speak about a relationship without mentioning economic considerations is apparent when he once again proposes marriage: "nos comptes sont soldés. Si vous vouliez, dit-il en montrant par un geste les champs qui entouraient sa maison, tout cela serait à vous!" (C 1091). His vocabulary and thoughts are saturated with pecuniary elements; for example, he addresses Marie as "beau trésor" (C 1091).

These words actually provide an accurate description of the young woman who displays the utmost courage and generosity, not only saving d'Orgemont's life and Montauran's, but Beaupied's and the comte de Bauvan's as well. In gratitude, Beaupied says his life is hers, and he repays his obligation to her when he helps her capture Bauvan and obeys her rather than following his duty as a soldier to seek out the marquis. Bauvan, who says "comptez sur moi à la vie, à la mort" (C 1109), tells the marquis that Marie is the duc de Verneuil's daughter; then when she appears, he dashes to the door and treats her with the utmost respect which helps her regain the esteem she is seeking. Later that evening, though, he is seen (whether knowingly or not) as an accomplice to Mme du Gua in another of her attempts to kill Marie: "Comte, . . . allez savoir si Pille-miche est au camp, amenez-le-moi; et soyez certain d'obtenir de moi, pour ce léger service, tout ce que vous voudrez, même ma main. --Ma vengeance me coûtera cher, dit-elle en le voyant s'éloigner; mais, pour cette fois, je ne la manquerai pas" (C 1142). Her previous attacks on Marie's life could be at least partially excused as politically motivated, since she could claim that she was protecting the leader of the royalists from assassination. One such occasion is at d'Orgemont's when she offers money for Marie's execution: "Mille écus à qui m'apportera la tête de cette catin! . . . Pour un seul coup de fusil je te donnerai tout ce que tu trouveras dans le trésor de notre usurier" (C 1084-85). Now Mme du Gua's offer of herself to Bauvan in exchange for his help shows the magnitude of her overwhelming desire for vengeance, which seems motivated solely by jealousy.

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[49] Lewis Hyde, *The Gift: Imagination and the Erotic Life of Property* (NY: Vintage, 1979) 128.

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Unlike Mathilde *de* La Mole, Mme *de* Rênal, Armance *de* Zohiloff and Marie *de* Verneuil who all belong to the nobility, Esther Gobseck, in *Splendeurs et misères des courtisanes*, does not. Although Marie de Verneuil may be the illegitimate daughter of a marquis, she is still recognized by blood ties, and Armance may be poor for the greater part of the novel but is nonetheless accepted in noble circles. Esther is not only illegitimate and poor, but as an illiterate Jewish prostitute, she comes from the dregs of society. Nevertheless, her lowly social status does not prevent her from demonstrating a nobility of character through her generosity: previously, she fed one lover and repaid the theft of a second. Esther shows her kindness also in her efforts to provide for Suzanne du Val-Noble, another courtesan.

The narrator describes Mme du Val-Noble as Esther's friend, and it is to this friend that she turns for help in order to commit suicide. The "friend" obtains poison from Asie and in turn receives fifty thousand francs which is both a payment and a generous gift. For Mme du Val-Noble, money has always been of the utmost importance; she cannot understand why Esther would wish to die amidst the opulence Nucingen has provided. It is because of her own desire for gain that she provides the toxic substance for Esther's death and makes no attempt to prevent it. Previously Asie had promised the means, but Esther knows that Herrera would not allow it until after Lucien's marriage to Clotilde; she, however, must sacrifice herself now. When she tells Mme du Val-Noble about her friend, a very happy woman who died, she is describing her former self--a being she is unable to survive--who lived virtuously for and with Lucien.

The poison is tested using one of the two dogs given by Nucingen to Esther; a gift meant to bring joy thus serves in Esther's preparations for death. The dogs' names are Roméo and Juliette which adds to the aura of death and uncompromising love that has been building. (While reading Esther's farewell letter, Lucien's desire to die increases when he remembers Roméo's reunion in death with Juliette.) Mme du Val-Noble is to dispose of the dog's body and support Esther's story that she received Roméo as a gift from Esther but lost him.

A comment from Mme du Val-Noble elevates Esther to the position of queen which invites parallels with two historical queens: both Marie-Antoinette of France and Esther of Persia, like Esther Gobseck, were strangers. Marie-Antoinette's Austrian origin came up repeatedly in the accusations made against her,[50] just as the label of prostitute remains firmly applied in Herrera's attacks on Esther. She tries to save Lucien just as Esther of Persia, the Jewess who came from the exterior and was made queen, endeavoured to save her people.

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[50] Girard, *Bouc* 32.

Early in the novel, Esther abandons prostitution to become a seamstress (that is, an "honest" worker) in an effort to be virtuous and hide her past from Lucien who is her "Dieu" (SM 453); when recognized, however, by those who knew her as a prostitute, she attempts suicide because she is driven by a belief that she must be worthy of Lucien. Herrera rescues her for fear that Lucien's reputation could be damaged by openly loving a prostitute and/or his energy diverted from the ambitious path Herrera has contrived. It is a new license on life, a type of rebirth, which he is offering, that starts with a paper granting her release from two years of police surveillance and restoring her rights immediately. Her behaviour which says "mille et mille fois: *Donnez-le-moi!*" (SM 459) shows her ardent desire for the gift. Herrera also pays to have her educated and converted to Catholicism, but any hope that she will become virtuous in a religious sense, devoting herself to the God of Christianity, vanishes: she remains firmly attached to Lucien and almost dies due to her separation from him. When she indicates she is incapable of refusing herself physically to Lucien, Herrera exclaims: "Fille de la race maudite! j'ai fait tout pour te sauver, je te rends à ta destinée" (SM 471). In her response, Esther shows her belief in the firm link between her virtue and Lucien; for either of the two, she is prepared to sacrifice herself:

> Ne puis-je aimer Lucien et pratiquer la *vertu*, que j'aime autant que je l'aime? Ne suis-je pas prête à *mourir* ici pour elle, comme je serais prête à *mourir* pour lui? Ne vais-je pas *expirer* pour ces deux fanatismes, pour la *vertu* qui me rendait digne de lui, pour lui qui m'a jetée dans les bras de la *vertu*? oui, prête à *mourir* sans le revoir, prête à vivre en le revoyant. (SM 471, my italics)

Lucien is aware of Esther's convictions, and he predicts her death as a result of Herrera's plan to make her the "gibier" by which to extract money from Nucingen: "Vendre Esther? . . . Elle en mourra" (SM 500). Randall Collins's discussion of the exchange theory of power (based upon the work of Peter Blau and Richard Emerson) supports Herrera's ability to dominate Lucien:

> Power emerges from exchanges . . . in which one individual (or side) has services that the other side wants, while the latter has nothing to give in return but compliance. Further, the dominant side must have a relative monopoly on those rewards: there are no alternative ways to get them. And the rewards must be highly desired--subordinates cannot do without them.[51]

Herrera has a monopoly on providing Lucien with the means to rise in society which he so desperately wants. Lucien must comply with whatever Herrera commands even though, as in the case of the sale of Esther to Nucingen, he opposes Herrera's plan. Not to obey Herrera is to risk the loss of the resources Lucien wants--and needs if he is to attain his goal of social elevation. Whereas Collin's theory applies to the commercial aspect of the relationship between Herrera and Lucien, it is inadequate in the case of Esther for whom the pecuniary is truly secondary, if not totally irrelevant. A better explanation of Lucien's power over Esther can be found in the theory of E. A. Ross: "In any sentimental relation the one who cares less can exploit the one who cares more"[52] and another from W. Waller and R. Hill: "That person is able to dictate the conditions of association whose interest in the continuation of the affair is least."[53] Esther is the one who cares more: her love relation with Lucien is so all-encompassing that it defines her very existence; on the other hand, Lucien has interests which are extraneous to the relationship and which would exclude Esther. It is easy for him to exploit Esther since he is irreplaceable to her. René Girard's analysis of Stendhal seems to provide equal insight into the relationship described by Balzac between Esther and Lucien: "Montrer à une femme vaniteuse qu'on la désire c'est révéler *soi* inférieur, répète souvent Stendhal. C'est donc s'exposer à désirer toujours sans jamais provoquer le désir."[54] If the quote is altered to read "Montrer à un *homme* vaniteux qu'on le désire" it becomes applicable to Balzac's character Esther. Esther has been too honest in her expression of love to the vain Lucien: he is too confident of her love to adequately appreciate it and will not begin to love her equally in return until he loses her.

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[51] Collins 347.

[52] E. A. Ross, *Principles of Sociology* (NY: Appleton, 1921) 136 quoted in Anthony Heath, *Rational Choice and Social Exchange: A Critique of Exchange Theory* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1976) 24.

[53] W. Waller and R. Hill, *The Family: A Dynamic Interpretation* (NY: Dryden, 1951) 191 quoted in Heath 24.

Esther does as Herrera says because she believes Lucien's well-being is in question, but she also clearly states to her lover that she does not intend to survive his union with Clotilde. As Christ makes a gift of his body upon the cross to save others, so Esther will give her body to be desecrated by Nucingen to save Lucien. Esther's body, whose use value (UV) has been usurped by Herrera to be transformed into merchandise in order to entice Nucingen into seeing its economic exchange value (EcEV), is in the field of production. With her suicide, which is a true expenditure, Esther propels herself into the domain of symbolic exchange (SbE). As Jean Baudrillard explains: "C'est le champ de la *consumation* c'est-à-dire de la destruction de la valeur d'usage (ou de la valeur d'échange économique . . .), non plus à fin de produire des valeurs signe, mais sur le mode d'une *transgression* de l'économique, restituant l'échange symbolique. Le don, le cadeau, la fête."[55] It is the distinction between *consumation* which is a totally unproductive expenditure, such as destruction in a fire or a suicide, and *consommation* which on the surface may appear to be linked to expenditure but, in effect, has productive ends. With UV and EcEV, it is a question of assigning value to Esther in the field of political economy, but with SbE, she escapes into a valueless realm.

The scene in which Herrera announces the definitive separation of Lucien and Esther also contains numerous images of death and direct references to it.

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[54] Girard, *Mensonge* 112.

[55] Jean Baudrillard, *Pour une critique de l'économie politique du signe* (Paris: Gallimard, 1972) 146.

Esther's spontaneous reaction is: "Voilà donc ma mort arrivée!" to which Herrera retorts: "meurs sans nous ennuyer de tes élégies" (SM 569). She makes: "un signe de tête qui voulait dire: 'Je vais écouter le *bourreau* . . . et j'aurai le courage de bien *mourir*.' . . . Carlos se mit à expliquer nettement . . . la *nécessité* pour Esther de se *sacrifier* à ce magnifique avenir" (SM 569, my italics). The tragedy of the young woman who agrees to the sacrifice is that the other characters take all the references to death in a figurative sense whereas Esther is communicating on a literal level. According to Roman Jacobson's discussion on communication, in the middle ground, between what the sender intends to be put into the message and the interpretation of the message by the receiver, much distortion can occur.[56] Since Esther's message is misread, Herrera takes no action to increase his surveillance to prevent her suicide at an inconvenient time, nor does Lucien act to prevent the sacrifice--the gift which he would have refused.

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The one possibility which exists to save Esther emerges when Asie refers to Nucingen as a "father", and it is this role that Esther asks him to adopt: "*Che fus âme audant que ch'aime ma file* . . . Si vous vouliez n'être que mon père, je vous aimerais bien, je ne vous quitterais jamais" (SM 598). Nucingen agrees, but the problem is that he assigns a time limit of forty days. Esther's reprieve is thus only temporary since Nucingen, who is spending huge amounts on Esther, intends to be rewarded by the young woman: "Il désirait . . . pendre . . . l'habit du père noble et toucher le prix de tant de *sacrifices*" (SM 600, my italics). The old banker cannot remove himself from the realm of pecuniary exchange; he has paid the price for goods and is now awaiting their delivery. The word *sacrifices* used here in connection with money stands in contrast and serves to highlight the tragedy of Esther's own impending sacrifice. Esther continues to issue warnings about her intention to commit suicide if Nucingen insists upon destroying her virtue and shows her honour by not committing suicide prior to "paying" him what he feels he is owed:

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[56] Roman Jacobson, "Linguistique et poétique," *Essais de linguistique générale* (Paris: Minuit, 1963) 214.

> Vous avez payé, je me dois. . . . Je n'ai pas le droit de *liquider* en me jetant dans la Seine. . . . j'ai la certitude qu'une heure de moi vaut des millions, avec d'autant plus de raison que ce sera la seule, la dernière. Après, je serai quitte, et pourrai sortir de la vie. . . . si nous restons ensemble dans les relations de père à fille, vous aurez un plaisir faible, mais durable; si vous exigez l'exécution du contrat, vous me pleurerez. . . . Votre fille, ESTHER. (SM 603-04)

Esther would prefer to remain Nucingen's "daughter"; but the choice is not hers. Counselled by Delphine who says Esther will not die and driven by a society who mocks the lack of return it sees on his investment, the wealthy old banker decides to take possession of his object.

Nucingen's "*Tonnant, tonnant . . . Tonne, et vie-toi à ma cheneroside*" (SM 526), which is echoed later by him (SM 553) and by Asie's "Je suis comme toi: donnant, donnant!" (SM 572), announces a monetary transaction far removed from the trust inherent in gift exchange. In effect, Nucingen exemplifies what Peter Ekeh describes as:

> [t]he morality of restricted exchange . . . with little of trust involved. . . . Wholly different is the operation of the morality of generalized exchange. Trust of others; trust that others will discharge their obligations to the enrichment of society rather than for their exclusive narrow self-interests; the willingness to give to others the benefit of the doubt: these are the true attributes of the morality of generalized exchange. Societies with a morality of generalized exchange enjoy a *credit mentality*: the belief that individuals are credit worthy and can be trusted to pay back what they owe.[57]

Trust and a credit mentality are completely foreign to Nucingen who has spent his life accumulating money by whatever means necessary. When he becomes possessed with love/infatuation for Esther, he is unable to subtract himself from commercial interests which have become ingrained. Multiple references are made to Nucingen's gifts to Esther as a means of purchase: Esther asks him: "Aime-t-on d'amour une femme qu'on achète?" (SM 578), and Europe refers to Esther as "une excellente acquisition" (SM 579). Esther compares herself to a caged bird which Nucingen has put on display; and like the bird, she does not see any reason to show gratitude towards her purchaser. In her farewell letter to Lucien, she refers to Nucingen as: "Ce monstre qui m'a si chèrement achetée" (SM 758). He continues in the role of monster after her death; rather than mourning her, he demands a refund because the purchased goods have not proven to be durable, even though he had been warned of their *one time only* use by Esther. Rather than the victim of the dupery of others, he is the epitome of deceit: he goes back on the deal for which Esther sacrificed her life.

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[57] Peter P. Ekeh, *Social Exchange Theory: The Two Traditions* (London: Heinemann, 1974) 59.

In her last encounter with Lucien, she denies that she plans to kill herself, but it is this route that she must follow because of her mistake of having loved too greatly. If she loved Lucien less, she would not sacrifice her virtue for her god (Lucien) and thus would remain worthy of him. She has not yet ingested the poison, yet it is still as "la mourante" (SM 690) that she presides over the festivities which are like the great feasts that the Aztecs held prior to the sacrifice of their victims.[58] The difference here is that an occasion of joy has been replaced by a celebration of the power of money; a rich corrupt old banker assumes the role of the executioner who leads away the beautiful generous young prey: "Nucingen donna seul la main à Esther" (SM 690).

In her farewell letter to Lucien, Esther again exhibits her scorn for the esteem shown money by her society: "Le monde, qui plie devant l'Argent ou la Gloire, ne veut pas plier devant le bonheur, ni devant la vertu; car j'aurais fait du bien... . . . Oui, j'aurais voulu ne vivre que pour toi et pour la charité" (SM 761). Esther, in effect, has given greatly to Lucien, even leaving him money under the pillow of her death bed. She calls herself: "ton pauvre chien fidèle, cette bonne fille qui volait pour toi . . . je n'ai jamais été qu'une émanation de ton âme . . . J'ai toujours pourvu à ton avenir en te donnant tout ce que j'ai..." (SM 760). Esther's generosity is accentuated not only by her own gifts, but by those which are made on her behalf; Nucingen writes to her: "Vous m'avez si fort changé . . . j'ai payé dix mille francs un tableau de Joseph Bridau, parce que vous m'avez dit qu'il était homme de talent et méconnu. Enfin je donne à tous les pauvres que je rencontre cinq francs en votre nom" (SM 602). Of course, Nucingen's expenditures are all merely advance payment for goods which he will insist be delivered.

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[58] Georges Bataille, *La part maudite* précédé de "La notion de dépense" (1949, 1933; Paris: Minuit, 1967).

Esther writes "faute d'argent et d'honneur, hélas! je ne puis pas être ta femme" (SM 760), and she indicates that a prostitute who has inherited five to six million can have her choice amongst even the oldest nobility. Esther has inherited even more but would be unable to choose Lucien because the lack of honour would be ever present. Money may be important to someone like Mme du Val-Noble, but it is honour that moves Esther. The only material object to which Esther is attached is a portrait of Lucien which has symbolic importance; she would rather see it destroyed than contaminated by money following her death: "je ne veux pas qu'on le pille ni qu'on le vende. La seule pensée de savoir ce qui a fait ma joie, confondu sous le vitrage d'un marchand . . . me donne la petite mort" (SM 759). For Esther, the portrait has become representative of her love, and like Baudrillard's symbolic gift, it is irreplaceable: substitution, which is possible in the homogeneous realm of the monetary, is out of the question here. The portrait, however, is unlike Hyde's gift: Lucien is not free to pass on the gift. Esther agrees to allow Lucien to give the portrait to Clotilde but then changes her mind: this symbolic gift must be preserved from any possible contamination.

* * *

While not completely unexpected, Lucien's death comes as more of a surprise than Esther's, which is amply foreshadowed. Lucien contemplates suicide after Coralie's death and just prior to meeting Herrera; his despair is caused by lack of money. When Herrera offers him money, he renounces suicide. When Esther dies, Lucien is well aware of the wealth she leaves him, but he still chooses to kill himself. Unknown to him, his re-entry into the world had been more or less assured by the efforts of Herrera and Mme de Sérisy plus their entourages. However, even had he known, he may still have chosen death just as Julien Sorel does: somehow acceptance into the nobility no longer holds the same attraction. Esther sacrifices herself thinking that she is saving Lucien by her actions; however, money is incapable of bringing Lucien happiness, and he responds to Esther's gift with his death.

Through his gifts in his testament, Lucien repairs some of the damage he has directly or indirectly caused. His bequest to Ève and David's children partially repays some of the hardship and heartache that he previously caused his relatives. His gift to Carlos Herrera is also a partial repayment: it consists of the convicts' money spent by Herrera on him when it should not have been, and it is meant to rescue Herrera from any difficulties that he might have in this regard. The money given Nucingen repays the money extorted by Esther on his behalf. On the one hand, it undoes the service Esther felt compelled to render out of love for Lucien and for which she sacrificed herself; on the other hand, it helps to restore Lucien's honourability. The next three gifts are meant for Esther. The first is to help prostitutes who want to leave the profession as Esther did (she earlier made a request to Lucien that two beds be founded at the l'Hôtel-Dieu); the second is financial assistance for debtors. The first two gifts are also directed at Coralie, the other young woman who sacrificed herself for him. The third gift is a grave-site monument to Esther, which conveys the idea of a union in death: Lucien requests to be buried beside her with the hand of his statue joined to hers. The second last gift Lucien makes is for Rastignac: a gold washstand; considering the material of which it is made, it is an appropriate gift since Rastignac is still caught up in the pursuits that Lucien has abandoned. The last gift is his library, which goes to the comte de Sérisy, the husband of his recognized mistress, whom he also chooses as the executor of his will. Is it an indirect gift to Mme de Sérisy with whom he has recently quarreled? Is it an attempt to repay any anguish Sérisy may experience because of his wife's liaison with Lucien? Is it a gift from a young man who has decided to follow an honourable course of action to an older man whom he respects? Is it an attempt to rally resources to support his honour after his death? Probably all of these elements appear in this last gift.

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Numerous additional cases of sacrifice can be found including Balzac's Colonel Chabert and Stendhal's Inès in *Le coffre et le revenant*, but in an effort to limit my corpus, I have restricted further examples of sacrifice to minor characters from the novels discussed in the first part of the previous chapter: Renard (MC), Gondrin (MC), Michaud (P) and Tascheron (CV). The case of Tascheron most closely parallels those already presented in this chapter because it is a question of heterosexual love. The others differ in that they depict sentiments of love/attachment expressed by men for other men, and they all have a military connection: Renard saves his friend in battle; Gondrin risks his life for his fellow soldiers; and Michaud shows complete devotion to his former military superior. Renard, in *Le médecin de campagne*, is mortally wounded while saving Genestas's life, but the sacrifice of his life is insufficient to compensate for what Genestas considers to be an unforgivable crime: Renard has taken Judith's love from Genestas. (As seen in other examples in Chapter 1, woman is often treated by the characters as a commodity that one possesses and from which one derives happiness, rather than as an adult who is free to make her own choices.) Although Renard claims they are even, Genestas disagrees: without Judith's love, the life which Renard has preserved for Genestas is meaningless and undesirable. What was intended to be a gift becomes a burden.

A second example of sacrifice, the case of Gondrin, brings to light the injustice of a whole system that withholds return gifts. As Gondrin explains: "j'avais fait à l'armée l'aumône de ma vie" (MC 459). He was among those who had risked their life to save others, but the general who promised a rich pension plus a cross for his efforts died, and Gondrin was refused even his ordinary pension despite his gift of twenty-two years of faithful service. Gondrin's consolation--Napoleon's embrace--has special significance. Even though Gondrin is illiterate, this non-monetary thanks from his idol reinforces the image of Gondrin as a very dignified individual, an image that is accentuated further in the care and craftiness that Benassis must exercise in giving his gifts to Gondrin; for example, Benassis selects the anniversaries of the battles of Austerlitz and Waterloo and Napoleon's birthday to invite him to dinner. His ruse is evident in his explanation of how he gets the proud Gondrin to accept pecuniary gifts by showing him the Emperor's portrait on the money. Benassis's gifts to Gondrin function to recognize an honourable and worthy man and to arouse the desire in others to express their appreciation for the gift of service previously given by this dedicated soldier. The ripple effect of Benassis's respect for and kindness toward Gondrin is seen when others imitate Benassis's example by inviting the heroic old warrior to dinner. The government may withhold the return gift that Gondrin merits, but at least some gift flows in his direction.

In *Les paysans*, Olympe Michaud explains the devotion of her husband: "Si vous saviez quelle reconnaissance profonde il a pour son général, à qui, dit-il, il doit son bonheur. Il n'a que trop de dévouement, il risquerait sa vie comme à la guerre" (P 199). Despite the peasants' intimidation which includes slaying his dog, Michaud remains dauntless in the continuation of his faithful duty. The cruelty of the peasants is underscored in their discussions to plot his death: "Elle [Mme Michaud] est pleine, dit la vieille mère [Tonsard]; mais si ça continue, on fera un drôle de baptême à son petit" (P 314). Nothing is sacred including maternity, even to a peasant who is a mother herself. The peasants wait until Olympe is in labour, and Michaud is seeking the doctor, to shoot him cowardly in the back. (It is another mother [Bonnebault's] who announces to the group that Olympe is in labour.) The magnitude of the sacrifice of Michaud is accentuated by the death of his child and of his wife, who cannot bear the shock of the tragic events.

The final example of sacrifice that I have selected is Tascheron, in *Le curé de village*. He is clearly a thief and a murderer, but Balzac uses gift to build empathy for this character. Since Tascheron stole in order to give and did not plan to kill Pingret, many feel execution is not warranted; even Pingret's heir requests that he be released, provided he return the stolen money. Véronique tries to bargain for Tascheron's life by an exchange of gifts: "faites-moi présent de cette vie, et vous aurez peut-être la mienne un jour!" (CV 694). Tascheron remains faithful to the end, but he would prefer to live. He briefly demonstrates this when he asks for his mother's assistance to obtain the impossible gift of freedom: "je veux vivre. Ma mère, prenez ma place, donnez-moi vos habits" (CV 737). It is not necessary that his mother refuse the gift: he realizes the inevitability of his position.

Tascheron's courageous concealment of Véronique's identity is a gift which shelters her from public ridicule while at the same time functioning to increase his own prestige in the community. As Pingret's heir states: "L'amour et non l'intérêt l'avait conduit là" (CV 743). In fact, Pingret, the victim, receives less sympathy than Tascheron because his avarice is seen as having done more harm than

Tascheron's crime: "Le vieux Pingret qu'était-ce? Un coffre-fort crevé! . . . 'Le père Pingret était le premier auteur du crime. Cet homme, en entassant son or, avait volé son pays. Que d'entreprises auraient été fertilisées par ses capitaux inutiles! il avait frustré l'Industrie, il était justement puni' " (CV 695). Pingret's servant's sacrifice of her own life in an attempt to save him is considered foolish by most; they hypothesize that, given Pingret's avarice, Jeanne would have received little reward, even if she had saved the miser. The only gift Jeanne had received for her years of dutiful service was a watch, which is also the only gift Nanon receives from old Grandet in *Eugénie Grandet*. Rather than being a present given to bring happiness, this object meshes better with the miser's goal of making his servant accountable for her time.

Conclusion

In seventeenth-century Classicism, although typically in conflict, love and honour are inextricably linked, and the accent is on the importance of honour. For an author such as Pierre Corneille, in the struggle that occurs between love and honour, love is a weakness which must be subordinated to honour, and love is only possible if honour is maintained. Characters, who have a strong sense of duty, feel compelled to fulfill their duty which in turn enhances their love. The priority to be given duty and honour can be found in Balzac's *Les Chouans* which is set in 1799, a time when idealized elements of inherent value could still be attributed to certain heroic members of the nobility, such as Marie de Verneuil and the marquis de Montauran, and when the preservation of one's honour came before all else, even love. This emphasis on honour continues to a large extent in Stendhal's *Armance*: both Armance and Octave struggle against their sentiments of love in order to act in a manner which will safeguard the esteem of the beloved. The conflict between honour and love in the early nineteenth century is not the same, however, as in seventeenth-century literature: what is honourable and worthy is no longer prevalent in a period in which respect may be purchased. In the novels, it is against the outward façade of honour which is for sale, and accepted by bourgeois society, that the merit of the heroines and heroes becomes more apparent. Initially, Mme de Rênal experiences great anxiety about abdicating her duty as a wife, and she would sacrifice her respectability in society to avoid God's vengeance through her children. In the end, however, she is prepared to sacrifice all for Julien: her love for him dominates unhesitatingly over society's definition of honour. For his part, Julien sticks to his battle code of honour until he receives Mme de Rênal's denunciation; at this point, a code of honour involving love takes over. In Balzac's *Splendeurs et misères des courtisanes* which is set at the same time as Stendhal's *Le rouge et le noir* but written later (1838-1847 as opposed to 1830), Esther's view of uncompromising virtue is equated with sexual fidelity to Lucien and does not exclude the dishonest extortion of money on his behalf. Lucien displays a weak character dominated by the dishonourable Herrera and is mesmerized by the goal of infiltrating the old nobility at whatever cost. He is unique among the characters who sacrifice themselves because of his strong attraction to and pursuit of money; the others show either scorn or general disinterestedness in money. In the novels, true nobility and honour are foreign to the pecuniary interests found in the bourgeois, and in the end, Lucien willingly detaches himself from a monetary fortune. Sacrifice, the means by which to show the legitimacy of one's sentiments, seems to afford the only route by which honour can be redeemed by Lucien. The following diagram illustrates the relationship between the gift of sacrifice and legitimacy in the novels of Stendhal and Balzac:

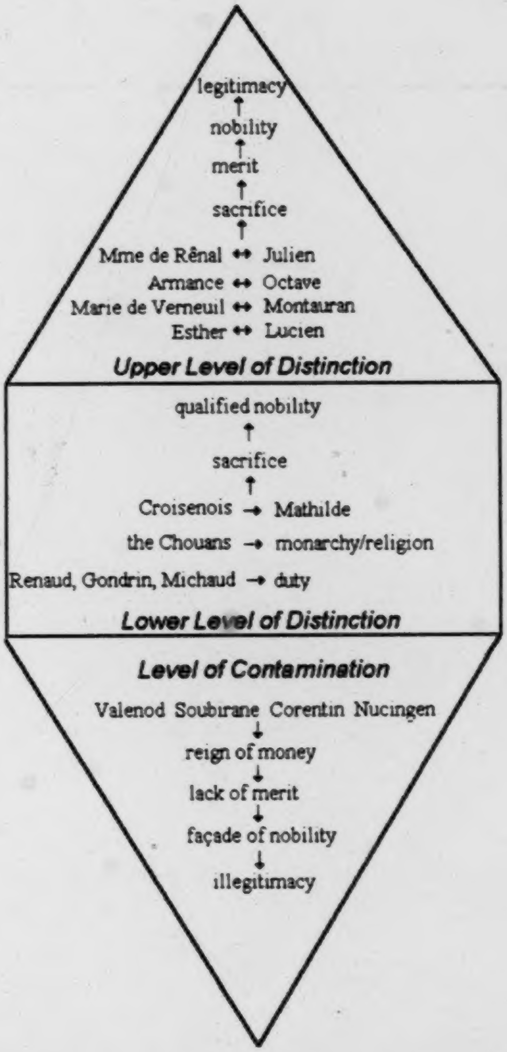
legitimacy
nobility
merit
sacrifice
Mme de Rênal ↔ Julien
Armance ↔ Octave
Marie de Verneuil ↔ Montauran
Esther ↔ Lucien
Upper Level of Distinction
qualified nobility
sacrifice
Croisenois → Mathilde
the Chouans → monarchy/religion
Renaud, Gondrin, Michaud → duty
Lower Level of Distinction
Level of Contamination
Valenod Soubirane Corentin Nucingen
reign of money
lack of merit
façade of nobility
illegitimacy

Figure 3: The relationship between sacrifice and legitimacy

Both authors use sacrifice to reveal a character's merit and nobility and to elevate him to a position of legitimacy, but sacrifice alone does not bestow legitimacy. The middle section of the diagram shows examples of characters who are prepared to sacrifice themselves, and while it is true that their actions serve to ennoble them, their nobility remains limited even in the case of death; their gift of sacrifice does not confer legitimacy in the way it does to the characters in the upper section of the diagram. In the distance that separates the legitimate from the illegitimate, they occupy a middle zone which is above the level of contamination yet below complete nobility. The difference lies in the type of sacrifice. That of someone like Croisenois or a soldier falls in the category of the ordinary and the predictable; a prescribed set of ancient rules is followed. This sort of sacrifice in the novels does not convey the same message of an extraordinary action that those in the upper portion of the diagram do. For example, Julien, Octave and Lucien act counter to what would be expected: they represent a challenge to bourgeois values whereas the others do not.

Death is the means by which the sacrifice is completed, and it holds an attraction for the main characters studied in this chapter: Julien, Mathilde, Mme de Rênal, Octave, Esther and Lucien all contemplate suicide; Mme de Rênal, Armance and Octave would welcome an early natural or accidental death; Octave, Esther and Lucien kill themselves; Montauran, Marie and Julien choose to die at the hands of others--a type of indirect suicide; and Armance effectively chooses to end her life when she enters a convent. The preoccupation with death and the pursuit of it is characteristic of Romanticism and contrasts sharply with a more current attitude that Bataille describes as follows: "we all flock to an area at the opposite end of the scale from death. The mainspring of human activity is generally the desire to reach the point farthest from the funereal domain, which is rotten, dirty and impure".[59] For the most part, the numerous references made to death and sacrifice in the four novels selected for study here have a positive element, and the willing sacrifice of one's life connotes an honourable end and relief to a previous combat with which one is weary. Stendhal shows particular skill in portraying this fatigue in Mme de Rênal who often just wants the struggle to end. Lucien and Julien also seem tired of playing society's game: Julien realizes true happiness is found only in Mme de Rênal's presence, and Lucien feels the same about Esther. Both young men reflect upon a different course of action and regret not having taken it. (Julien considers spending his life in Verrières near Mme de Rênal, and Lucien wonders why he does not marry Esther.) Esther dies happily if we can believe her farewell letter to Lucien, but even with her it is more the inner peace and tranquillity after an extended period of turmoil that Julien and Octave experience, rather than the great explosion of joy which is associated with Bataille's sacrifice. The sacrifice itself ennobles the giver and bestows a "legitimacy" of spirit in the case of someone like Julien that nothing else could. In fact, the words *noble sacrifice* from a certain perspective contain an element of redundancy because true sacrifice is noble; on the other hand, the words *bourgeois sacrifice* would seem nonsensical or contradictory at best.

Looking at the novels, a certain pattern emerges at the point of sacrifice in each of them: Julien with Mme de Rênal, Octave with Armance, Montauran with Marie, Lucien with Esther. Each willingly makes the sacrifice out of love for the other and becomes even permanently bonded to that other. The heroes may demonstrate despair and weariness with the struggle, but these negative components do not signal a victory for the bourgeois. Sacrifice/death is consciously chosen in the case of a character such as Julien, or Octave or Lucien, and their message of defiance is too strong for it to be a question of their defeat:

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[59] Georges Bataille, *Literature and Evil*, trans. Alastair Hamilton (London: Calder, 1973) 48.

their adamant refusal to participate in the new system precludes any possibility that they can be considered beaten. Rather than being crushed by the new values that revolve around money, the heroes who freely sacrifice themselves represent a challenge to the way in which society is being restructured. The gift in the form of the willing sacrifice of one's life becomes a political act of self-affirmation that confirms individual merit; the heroes do not succumb to the counter-discourse of self-negation to which the bourgeois forces would submit them.

The influence of Enlightenment thought upon the Romanticism of Stendhal and Balzac is evident: a new nobility based upon individual merit, rather than strictly upon birth, appears in the novels. It is characterized by dynamism, energy and heroism and by a refusal to accept the bourgeois reign of money as legitimate. In effect, it is Julien's, Octave's and Lucien's choice of death, instead of a life subjected to the dictates of bourgeois values, that serves to legitimize them. Their rejection of wealth and their willingness to sacrifice themselves bestows an honourability upon them which provides irrefutable evidence of their legitimacy. Even though Stendhal and Balzac may have embraced the Enlightenment idea of the recognition of individual merit and rejected birth as a guarantee of the nobility of an individual, remnants of the old system of thought still appear in their novels: the link to blood surfaces from time to time and continues to explain the occurrence of individual merit at least in the minds of some characters. A strong connection exists between the nobility of spirit and the nobility of blood of characters, such as the marquis de La Mole, Montauran and Marie de Verneuil; their distinction is consistent with what would be expected by their birth. The widespread degeneracy of the old nobility in the novels contradicts the characters' perception of the role the nobility should play; the lethargy and lack of purpose in life of the young nobles, such as Norbert de La Mole in *Le rouge et le noir*, and the self-interest of Mme d'Espard (IP), Mme de Bargeton (IP) and Mme de

Montcornet (P) do not mesh with the ideals of heroism and generosity that had traditionally been part of the nobility. The problem of the decline in the quality of the old nobility is aggravated by the introduction of new members from the bourgeoisie. In the novels, new entrants, such as Valenod (RN), Nucingen (SM), Philippe Bridau (R) and Charles Grandet (EG), have obtained huge sums by questionable methods, bought their way into the nobility and tend to be antipodal to anything noble. They are self-interested takers, not generous givers, and their despicable behaviour is related back to their bourgeois roots and values. No possibility exists for their full recognition by the old nobility (nor by the peasants in *Les paysans* which was discussed in the preceding chapter): they remain usurpers.

Whereas the lack of a noble blood line serves to exclude some characters, for others the possibility of a connection through blood suggests an explanation for their merit within the novels. For example, Lucien Chardon de Rubempré believes nobility has been passed to him through his mother. In the case of Julien Sorel, the possibility that he is the illegitimate son of a noble could account for his admirable qualities in the early nineteenth century just as the nobility of Marivaux's Marianne seems proof of her noble blood in the eighteenth century. However, even between *La vie de Marianne* and *Le rouge et le noir* a major shift is apparent. In her rejection of marriage to a bourgeois (who by definition in the novel is devoid of merit), Marianne seems just as justified as does Mathilde in her desire for marriage to a peasant who is distinguished by his personal merit. Mathilde de La Mole's imitation of Marguerite de Navarre makes clear the influence of the Enlightenment which supported individual merit and opposed a hierarchy based on birth. Julien, the son of a peasant, is raised to the same level as Boniface de La Mole, who is doubly bound to the nobility by his birth and his uncompromising heroic principles and actions. Whereas it would have been unthinkable for Marguerite de Navarre to love a peasant, part of Mathilde's nobility as a character stems from her ability to recognize merit in a peasant.

Julien, Lucien, Mme de Rênal and Esther all die just shortly before the July Revolution of 1830, which was to consolidate the political power of the bourgeoisie and after which pecuniary matters were to become more and more dominant. A foreshadowing of the July Monarchy and its bourgeois values can be seen in the triumph of the two barons, Nucingen and Valenod, who have risen to power through deceit and corruption. The degradation of the old nobility, which has rendered it incapable of resistance, is reflected in the lack of heroism that Mathilde observes and in the importance attributed to money that Octave mocks. A response to the preponderance of bourgeois values can be found in the sacrifice of the heroines and heros in the novels: through their death they become representative of an opposing force in society that they could never have been if they had chosen life. In *Literature and Evil*, Bataille explains that "sacrifice as an institution on which the social bond was based, though no reason was ever given why the spilling of blood, rather than some other means, lay at the foundation of the social bond."[60] Then in *La part maudite,* he gives an example, attributing Christianity's success to the loss symbolized in Christ's sacrifice.[61] The young heroines and heroes, who choose sacrifice, may like Christ be unable to change what is happening, but they do serve as examples, as a protest, that there is an alternative, a better way, and that the bourgeois elite should not go unchallenged. In the next chapter, I want to look at a challenge to the bourgeois values from another segment of characters who also sacrifice themselves: artists and scientists. The perspective of the gift alters slightly and is doubly present; it is a question of the interior gift or talent that must be nurtured and of the product which results that is a gift to be put into circulation.

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[60] Bataille, *Literature and Evil* 50-51.

[61] Bataille, *La part maudite* 29.

Chapter 4 The Gift of the Artist and Scientist

The early nineteenth century represented in the novels of Balzac and Stendhal was a time of great political and social disruption in which a divine right of kings monarchy and ruling aristocracy disappeared and were finally replaced with a bourgeois monarchy in 1830. This was also a period of transition for the arts. Previously, artists received financial support from patrons amongst the nobility and royalty, but this source of funding had largely vanished due to the relative decline in wealth of the elite minority as money shifted increasingly into the hands of the bourgeoisie. In the preceding chapters, I explored the presence of the gift in the novels as a means to reveal gender relationships, to establish bonds between strangers and to verify legitimacy. In this chapter, I shall examine the gift of the artist and scientist during this period of transition from two main perspectives: first, the inner talent to be developed, and secondly, the cultural product which results and is passed to another. The creation may be reserved for a small group of peers who alone are capable of appreciating it, or it may be more generally available. An attempt will be made to determine whether money is an asset or an obstacle to the development of the artistic or scientific gift and to the flow of its cultural output. My study ranges from characters who succeed to those who fail and from ones who achieve a qualified success to others who lack the gift but are believed to possess it by the inept bourgeois segment of society.

It will be of particular interest to explore the effect that control of money by the bourgeoisie has upon the flow of the gift. Can the gift circulate in a give-accept-reciprocate manner as described by Mauss, or do impediments arise that hamper the gift's flow? The situation becomes more complicated than the case of the gift of an object whose value has been objectively determined following prescribed economic criteria. (For instance, a specific price can be attached to the diamonds, pearls and rubies that are given as gifts by Graslin to Véronique [CV] as part of the courtship by which he hopes to secure her father's fortune; on the other hand, the price to be attributed to a piece of canvas covered with paint is open to interpretation.) Complications arise because the gift of artistic ability initially must be present, then developed and finally passed on in the form of an artistic creation. A sustained effort may be required to develop the gift--an effort which may or may not be forthcoming. Assuming the effort is present and the gift is developed, further problems may still arise in the recognition of the gift. A painting, for instance, has no objectively determinable value and an ability on the part of the receiver is required in order to recognize its worth. I shall examine the various aspects of the artistic gift: its innate presence/absence in the artist, its development/abandonment by the artist and its recognition/misinterpretation by the patrons in the novels. A constant concern will be the interplay between the gift and monetary interests.

The Artist

Hippolyte Schinner, one of the main characters in the short story *La bourse* (1832), is rare amongst the artists portrayed by Balzac in that everything is operating as it should: he possesses the gift, works arduously to reveal it, and receives fame plus monetary wealth for his creations. Typically, at least one of these ingredients is missing in the artists portrayed; for example, I will be taking a closer look at Joseph Bridau (R) who never receives the monetary recognition he merits; Féder (F) and Pierre Grassou (G) who receive fame and monetary recognition but lack true talent for painting; and Lucien (IP, SM) and Raphaël (PC) who cease to struggle. Schinner sees that a horrible, disintegrating pastel portrait is valued by Adélaïde and her mother (Mme Leseigneur de Rouville) because of its resemblance to the person depicted, and he offers to make a painting of the portrait. The gift is suggested with the sole purpose of forming "quelque lien" (La b 426) with the two Leseigneur women, and Mme Leseigneur accepts, although she is well aware of "l'étendue des liens que nouent de semblables obligations" (La b 426). Thus the gift of the portrait is both proposed and obtains consent with the formation of a bond in view. It is Hippolyte's dedication to his work which initiates the chain of giving: while he is lost in his art he falls from a ladder, and his accident gives Adélaïde the opportunity to revive him. His suggestion to do the portrait of Adélaïde's father is an effort to strengthen an attachment which has already begun. Although he says the portrait will provide him a relaxing diversion now and again from his more serious painting tasks, he becomes so inspired and driven by his love for Adélaïde that he spends two months concentrating his efforts on the portrait and considers it one of his best works. The fact that his gift loses the stigma associated with portraits as a degraded art form during the period indicates the power of love to stimulate the creative genius of the artist.

Old Kergarouët is a faithful friend and a great giver to Adélaïde and her mother; he consistently loses enough money playing cards with them to pay their living expenses. (Mme de Rouville's pride will not allow her to accept an outright gift of money.) He attempts to eliminate Hippolyte's position as a gift-giver to the women by paying him twice the amount that his own portrait would cost (which would thus reimburse Hippolyte for his gift). The artist refuses because he does not want the portrait, which means so much to Adélaïde, to be transformed from a gift to a commercial transaction; that is, he wants to remain in the gift-giving circle. The gift flows back to Hippolyte in the form of a purse which is painstakingly hand-crafted by Adélaïde. The purse is a labour of love to match his: "le don du peintre ne pouvait être récompensé que par un témoignage de tendresse" (La b 442). Hippolyte also receives Adélaïde whom he wants for his wife--another exception to the usual pattern since she is extremely poor and without the status to elevate him socially. Perhaps Hippolyte Schinner, in *La bourse* (1832), is an indication of a certain optimism in a younger Balzac that the possibility existed for both the personal happiness and professional success of a principled and energetic artist.

Some ten years later, when Balzac created Joseph Bridau, in *La rabouilleuse* (1842), all is no longer as ideal as in *La bourse*: the gifted person now encounters numerous obstacles. While Hippolyte receives much loving support from his mother, Joseph's mother (Agathe) wants him to become an office worker and opposes his interest in painting; Agathe considers that his artistic endeavours are misdirected energy rather than a development of talent. She never sees him bringing glory to the family, nor is she proud of him as she is at times of her older son, Philippe. When Joseph sells some paintings to pay Philippe's debts, her admiration remains centred on Philippe: "Il est notre gloire et tout notre avenir" (R 302). Her notion of painting as a trade (rather than art) becomes understandable given that the period represented is the early nineteenth century; Agathe's opinion is a continuation of the prevalent view in the middle of the eighteenth century which held the artist to be "un ouvrier habile dans une technique délicate."[1] Later, Agathe supports herself through a job in lottery sales, employment obtained through Joseph's contacts as an artist. At this point, she still does not recognize Joseph's ability: "Mme Bridau ne croyait pas encore à cette gloire excessivement contestée comme le sont toutes les vraies gloires" (R 524). Joseph, encumbered with debt as he struggles to establish himself, is considered a failure by his mother whereas Philippe, who has amassed a fortune through dishonourable deeds, is regarded with pride. For her, success is measured in monetary terms.

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[1] Paul Bénichou, *Le sacre de l'écrivain, 1750-1830: Essai sur l'avènement d'un pouvoir spirituel laïque dans la France moderne* (1973; Paris: Corti, 1985) 421.

Joseph makes reference to making money through his talent: "avec le temps et la patience, peut-être pourrai-je gagner à la fois gloire et fortune. . . . ma fortune à moi est dans mes pinceaux" (R 424, 430), but he is not involved in any scheme to rapidly enrich himself. Instead, he has committed himself to the long and painstaking task of nurturing the artistic gift with which he has been endowed. His attempts to earn money centre on a need to pay his debts which he has incurred in his efforts to develop his talent, rather than from a desire to impress others with his wealth. Joseph believes that his hard work will result in fruition when honour is bestowed upon him in recognition of his passing on the gift through his paintings. Although Joseph and Philippe both show an interest in making a fortune, they approach it from opposite directions: Joseph seeks to earn the honour which will merit him society's recognition in the form of money; Philippe plots to obtain wealth to buy honour and acceptance in the nobility. It is a comment on the power of money as represented in the novels of the early nineteenth century that Philippe at the height of his wealth associates with the elite of society. For Joseph, artistic gift does not bring wealth, but he does end up affluent through his inheritance from Philippe and through marriage to the daughter of a rich farmer. Philippe refuses Joseph any assistance during his life, but when he dies, his possessions remain within the family, even though it is a family Philippe would reject as shown in Chapter 2.

Although Joseph receives Philippe's magnificent residence and title of count, the gift which appears to bring him the greatest joy is a set of paintings. The movement of the paintings in the novel is indicative of society's attitude toward art: it is of value only when a high monetary price is assigned to it; art has no intrinsic value from a bourgeois perspective. Max poses as a brother/friend to Joseph's uncle and initially favours giving Joseph the paintings which he thinks are worthless. They mean so much to the artist, and Max concludes that it is an inexpensive way to get rid of him. Max, however, wants them back when he discovers their value, and he falsely accuses the honest Joseph of having robbed his uncle of a treasure. Joseph shows his integrity in vowing to return the paintings: "J'ai dans mon pinceau de quoi faire ma fortune, sans devoir rien à personne, pas même à mon oncle" (R 454); but the delivery man in the form of Philippe positions himself to keep them because of their monetary value. Later, Philippe uses them to decorate his residence with the goal of impressing others.[2] He remains immune to the pleasure Joseph experiences due to the gift of the artist which is displayed. The awe Joseph expresses is unrelated to the pecuniary value of the masterpieces, while it is the sole determinant of their worth for his brother.

Joseph's artistic development as a child benefits from the flow of gift in the artist Chaudet's treatment of him: "Donnez-lui un carton, du papier, des crayons . . . va chercher des gâteaux, des friandises et des bonbons" (R 291). Chaudet is not giving indiscriminately to just any child who wanders in from the street but to the son of Bridau who previously helped him. As he explains to Agathe, he feels indebted: "J'ai des obligations à défunt votre mari, je voulais m'acquitter en encourageant son fils" (R 293). Chaudet endeavours to enlighten Agathe about Joseph's brilliant future as an artist which she continuously attempts to destroy: "des dispositions comme les siennes sont rares, elles ne se sont dévoilées de si bonne heure que chez les Giotto, les Raphaël, les Titien, les Rubens, les Murillo; . . . faites-en un imbécile, . . . un misérable gratte-papier: vous aurez commis un meurtre" (R 293). While Chaudet does not succeed in convincing Agathe, neither does she succeed in stifling Joseph's artistic desire; he disobeys her and continues to seek the aid of other artists in developing his talent, help they seem even more eager to give in the face of Agathe's opposition. Besides gift flowing to Joseph because of Chaudet's obligation to Bridau, it can also be seen returning to the family because of what Napoleon feels he owes Bridau for his dedicated service: both Joseph and Philippe receive their education free and Agathe gets a pension. Gifts to the family because of Bridau's service also come from the comte de Sérisy: he reduces Philippe's punishment for his involvement in a political plot, and he facilitates Joseph's marriage.

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[2] Carabine, a prostitute in *La cousine Bette*, is an example of another character (like Philippe) who is interested in art entirely for ostentatious goals. As payment for her assistance to Mme Nourrisson, who is plotting Valérie's death, she requests a painting which will surpass any of Josepha's art possessions.

The flow of gift back to the family, that result from Bridau's original gifts, can be diagrammed as follows:

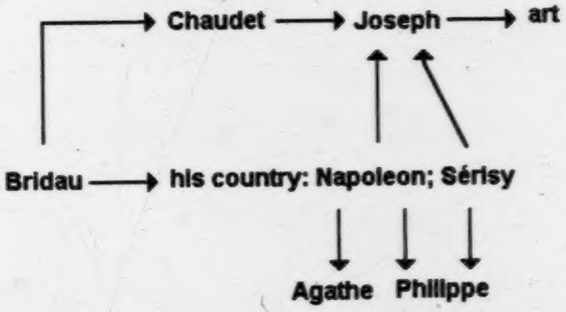

Figure 4: Bridau's gifts as a catalyst for the flow of gift to his family

Although Agathe and Philippe benefit from the gifts that circulate back, Joseph gains the most. The encouragement and assistance he receives from Chaudet help in the development of his artistic talent, and the gift continues to move since Joseph later passes it to others through his art.

Even though Joseph's artistic gift is recognized by other artists, who use their influence to make him the recipient of an award, it does not increase the sales of his paintings: "[Joseph] ne plaisait pas au Bourgeois. Cet être, de qui vient l'argent aujourd'hui, ne délie jamais les cordons de sa bourse pour les talents mis en question" (R 525). The bourgeois is incapable of appreciating art in and for itself. Since he views everything from the perspective of an investment, and believes that the risk in buying Joseph's work is too high, the bourgeois would rather purchase the work of a Féder or of a Pierre Grassou whom he incorrectly assumes to be great artists.

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From the first page of Stendhal's *Féder ou le mari d'argent*, it is evident that Féder does not possess the gift capable of producing splendid works of art: "Du véritable artiste, il n'avait que le mépris pour l'argent" (F 1275). Féder himself becomes aware of his lack of talent, but that does not stop society from bestowing recognition and honour on him as if he were a great artist. This misapplication of prestige is largely due to the contaminating effects of bourgeois values. Rosalinde, whom Féder selects as a mistress to aid his career, is determined to secure a position for Féder in the Institute where membership is more dependent upon monetary influence and political manoeuvring than it is upon artistic creation. She is able to buy him favourable articles in the press which contribute to him being awarded the *Légion d'honneur* cross for an exhibition of his work which in turn doubles his popularity; he becomes honoured because he possesses the cross, rather than for his talent. Following Rosalinde's advice about how to dress and act as the heart-broken widower is also effective in building his reputation as an artist, although, like the newspaper articles, these have nothing to do with his talent. The emphasis is not on the development of Féder's artistic abilities; it is upon the establishment of his reputation in order to make his paintings commercially viable. Once Féder has obtained money and fame, Rosalinde expects he will abandon painting: "tu me permets de jeter tes pinceaux par la fenêtre . . . le mariage d'amour devient un mariage raisonnable" (F 1281).

The vanity of Féder's male and female clients is extreme. Stendhal makes a mockery of the men who want their portrait done to leave behind for posterity just in case they should become famous. When painting female clients, Féder experiences greater success when he follows Rosalinde's advice and portrays them with younger features than they actually have. They accept his representation, deluding themselves into believing they are more youthful and thus of greater value in the patriarchy. Féder uses the same colour and false portrayal for all his portraits of women; he merely churns out multiple reproductions for bourgeois consumption as opposed to creating works of art.

The only portrait he shows a keen desire to paint is that of Valentine for whom his sentiments are other than those of the professional artist, although he may try to convince himself otherwise: "je ne m'attache point à cette petite femme . . . je rends justice à un modèle singulier que le hasard jette dans mon atelier" (F 1302). Before meeting her, he tries to convince her brother that another artist would produce a better portrait. Although he lacks the gift himself, he has the ability to judge it in others, including Mme de Mirbel, whose portraits he admires, and Delacroix. (He uses the explanation of the gift of free painting lessons for Delacroix to gain admittance of the young artist during Valentine's modeling sessions.)

Féder knows he lacks the gift himself but feigns possession of it to make contact with Valentine. He recognizes the extent of Valentine's piety and speaks of "[son] projet de faire cadeau d'un tableau représentant la Madone à un couvent de la *Visitation* auquel il avait des obligations" (F 1295). Féder fabricates this gift project on the spot as a ploy to make a favourable impression on the young woman. The obligations towards the church, that he claims to have, indicate that he has a positive relationship with the institution that means so much to Valentine. It would put her in a difficult position to refuse to pose for a portrait destined for such a holy place.

When the portrait of Valentine as a nun is finished, Féder uses gift to establish a bond between them. Although the portrait is priceless to him, he will burn it if she does not say: "Je vous le donne" (F 1315). In uttering these exact words, Valentine strengthens a relationship which goes against the patriarchal rule that she must remain a non-circulating wife. The portrait is described as "magnifique" and "admirablement fait" (F 1314) which contradicts other parts of the story that stress Féder's lack of talent. It appears that the gift momentarily reveals itself due to the inspirational surge brought on by love, which is also seen in an artist such as Steinbock, in *La cousine Bette*. The value of the portrait to Féder lies in its depiction of the woman who fascinates him. A parallel can be drawn to the lithographed image resembling Féder which Valentine kisses when she is alone. Its value to her is derived from the reflection she finds in it of her beloved and is solely symbolic. She carefully camouflages it from exterior view by purchasing seven other similar pieces. In a comparable manner, when Féder presents Valentine as a nun, he conceals her under the identity of a woman who has been removed completely from temporal circulation.

Boissaux (Valentine's husband), whose interest in Féder's painting is not motivated by a love of art, acquires Féder's work to flaunt his wealth and wants to ensure that the artist's name is prominently displayed: "il ne faut pas que ce diable de nom, si cher, aille ensuite être caché par la bordure" (F 1298). Boissaux hopes to increase the value of the portrait further and asks Delangle (Valentine's brother) to persuade Féder to place a cross after his name. When it appears that Féder will be made a member of the Institute, Boissaux's immediate reaction is envy, but then he quickly reflects how he too will benefit: "ses portraits, étant d'un membre de l'Institut, feront plus d'honneur aux gens qui en auront!" (F 1310). The image of an uncultured, pretentious bourgeois is enhanced when Boissaux purchases books with expensive bindings and when he discusses painting with Delangle. (It is apparent that neither of them has the slightest idea about art.)

The books, like the portraits, fall into the category of Thorstein Veblen's conspicuous consumption. They are meant to impress rather than having a value for themselves. Boissaux is afraid of literature and disposing of the books shows his eager acceptance of Féder's idea that they are a liability to his reputation which can be better maintained through exquisite dinner parties. The treatment of literature in *Féder* makes a mockery of bourgeois ostentation. Neither the dinner guest, who claims his eyesight has gone from all his reading, nor the other guests, who mock him and Valentine for their errors, are knowledgeable in the literary field. A game of one-upmanship is played in which none of the players are qualified but aim at unveiling the ignorance of their competitors in order to put themselves in a favourable position. The episode involving Boissaux's gift of his books to his guests is especially humorous: in their haste to claim the prize, they grab whatever they can, and no one ends up with a complete set of any work: the attempt to gain "glory" through the display of expensive items (that are now incomplete) will only add to their ridiculous antics.

Valentine's keen desire for knowledge sharply contrasts with the typical competitive bourgeois involvement in literature aimed at impressing (or ridiculing). Her brother recognizes that her ignorance stems from a lack of exposure due to her stifling convent education rather than from any mental deficiency, and he finds her a tutor to rectify the situation. By educating her, he hopes to protect her from unfavourable comments from Boissaux and society concerning her intelligence. At this point, Valentine realizes her debt to Mme Gerlat, the nun who disobeyed convent law in order to develop her analytical ability: "Ce qui est prohibé par-dessus tout, dans les couvents *bien pensants*, ce sont les *amitiés particulières*: elles pourraient donner aux âmes quelque *énergie*" (F 1324). This is an example in the novel of a private relationship which S. N. Eisenstadt and L. Roniger theorize closed societies oppose because it is a threat to group authority and obligations.[3] The community or group is seen as interfering with the flow of gift which is the exact opposite of its supposed function as discussed in Chapter 2; the sense of community should facilitate giving, not hamper it. Mme Gerlat's giving to Valentine could be categorized as a "free" gift initially (if such a designation is possible) because no expected return on the gift exists; but the gift does circulate back. Valentine's gift of money improves the nun's position in the convent, a fact which suggests that the church was not exempt from the contaminating influence of money during the period.

Féder is not immune to pecuniary interests either. The narrator speaks of "le génie du commerce" (F 1288) within him who speculates in commodities but loses. Later, when Delangle gives him an opportunity to speculate in a sugar venture, he is delighted: "il lui importait beaucoup d'être un peu homme d'argent, et non pas un simple peintre, aux yeux de tous les hommes à argent" (F 1338). Artists do not receive the prestige and respect that wealth commands during the period represented, and Féder does not want to be seen in an inferior position. He partially adopts the values of the bourgeois with whom he associates despite his lack of respect for them. As long as Féder has his father's money, he can lead a carefree life as an artist, not charging for his portraits, but when he can no longer draw upon this source of funds, he must alter his behaviour. Although he scorns the bourgeois' attachment to money, he continues to consort with them and craftily flatters them to achieve his objectives.

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[3] S. N. Eisenstadt and L. Roniger, *Patrons, Clients and Friends: Interpersonal Relations and the Structure of Trust in Society* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1984) 286-87.

The gullibility of the bourgeois appears to stem from their inflated self-image and their ineptitude with regards to art. For example, Martineau's exchange of the rent owed by Féder for a portrait is a kind gesture, but it is entangled with his desire to impress his peers (which he does); he prominently displays the portrait of himself in uniform in his shop: "Ce portrait, d'une ressemblance hideuse, fit l'admiration de toutes les boutiques environnantes" (F 1278). When Féder refuses payment for the portraits of two other national guards who had been wounded and offers to do more portraits of national guards at half price, they take his praise seriously ("la vanité gloutonne de ces héros prenait tous les compliments à la lettre" [F 1278]), and his popularity increases.

Boissaux is another bourgeois whom Féder secretly disdains while outwardly showing him great respect. Their relationship starts as client and artist, but Féder wants it to be closer than that because of his attraction to Valentine. When he does Valentine's, Boissaux's and Delangle's portraits for free--despite Delangle's initial insistence of "point d'argent, point de portrait" (F 1290)--he is making a gift through which he no doubt hopes to form bonds. He is astute enough, however, in his observations to see that the way to gain true credit with Boissaux is through furthering Boissaux's political ambitions, and he passes from artist to adviser. To help Boissaux impress others, Féder counsels him on his residence, dinner parties and books, and he writes a script for him about current news items. All of these actions have the same aim for Féder: he wants to secure Boissaux's friendship, so he can continue to see Valentine. Boissaux's response is to pay Féder for the summaries of his ideas on books and news events which distances himself from any obligation to Féder. These payments further add to Boissaux's image as a pompous individual who believes that money can buy anything.

* * *

Balzac's short story, *Pierre Grassou*, written in August 1839, contains similarities with Stendhal's *Féder* which dates from May of the same year. Grassou (like Féder) receives the cross for his paintings and achieves great popularity among the pretentious bourgeois who want themselves preserved in a portrait. Neither character possesses the true gift of the artist, but whereas Féder is astute enough to recognize his lack of talent, Grassou continues to cling to his dream of being a great artist and takes money from the sale of his work as proof of his success. He resists attempts by Schinner or Joseph Bridau (who represent men with the gift and the ability to assess its presence in others) to dissuade him from painting. Grassou goes from one master painter to another searching for the recipe to follow in order to produce a work of art, but he never finds it. What he does not realize is that he is missing the one essential ingredient: the gift of artistic creativity. True artists criticize his lack of originality as an unacceptable deficiency; but the bourgeois Grassou sees it as a redeeming feature because it brings in revenue: "Inventer en toute chose, c'est vouloir mourir à petit feu; copier, c'est vivre" (G 1101).

The art dealer Élias Magus, whom the narrator describes as "l'usurier des toiles" (G 1093), is largely responsible for Grassou persisting with his career as a painter. During the years before he becomes famous, Magus supplies him with sufficient revenue from his work to maintain a subsistence level of life. Magus's interests lie with money, not art, and he has analyzed the situation to come up with a product that sells: imitations of the old masters. He shows no hesitation in buying Grassou's work for a pittance and then selling it at exorbitant prices to the bourgeois. The latter, in the form of Vervelle, does not recognize that he has been victimized by Magus's swindling. Rather than being outraged, Vervelle admires Grassou more as an artist after discovering that Grassou did the paintings; Grassou, however, remains painfully aware of his inferiority. Although he plans to develop his own style and express it in original works, he postpones doing this until he is financially secure. At the end of the story, he is still busy producing works, such as the portraits which the bourgeois adore. The possibility of him producing something of quality--rather than the homogeneous paintings he methodically churns out--is remote, yet the narrator says that he will be given a spot in the academy. The contaminating influence of bourgeois power again triumphs over true art.

Grassou's assiduity concerning painting does not produce masterpieces, but his unrelenting diligence and his frugality win him the support of the bourgeois: in him they find a reflection of their own values. When they are faced with the question as to whether Grassou is an artist, their response is: "Dites-en ce que vous voulez, il place vingt mille francs par an chez son notaire" (G 1111). Here an obfuscation of the issues occurs in the bourgeois mind; that is, for the bourgeois, Grassou's thrift somehow serves to verify his worth as an artist. Grassou also benefits from royal patronage, not because of any artistic ability, but because of the support he and his family have shown the monarchy. (In this he succeeds whereas Lucien, due to his inconsistencies in political allegiance, fails as will be seen later in this chapter.)

Magus introduces Grassou to Virginie Vervelle and helps to convince him that it would be a mistake not to marry her. The power that money represents to Grassou shows in the ease with which Virginie is transformed into a desirable acquisition because of her dowry. The sketches he gives Virginie and Mme Vervelle are part of the marriage negotiations as are the portraits which he does at no charge. Grassou is attractive to Vervelle as a son-in-law because he believes Grassou is a great artist and is frugal besides. Vervelle is representative of the bourgeois (like Boissaux, in *Féder*) who spends large sums on art for display. Vervelle, the narrator and Magus insist that Vervelle has a strong love of art.

However, Vervelle has a complete lack of ability to judge the quality of art, which adds to his image as a wealthy bourgeois who deludes himself into believing that he is elevating his social position through his purchases. For those capable of discernment, his collection of paintings would be a source of derision, not admiration. In addition, his practice of veiling artwork, that is unsuitable for viewing by children, recalls the alterations that Mme de Fervaques, the parvenu in *Le rouge et le noir*, has done to her paintings to render them acceptable. In both cases, the attitudes and values of the bourgeoisie with regard to art are revealed.

Although Grassou's lack of talent excludes him from being recognized as an artist by anyone but the ignorant bourgeois, he is still included in a gift-giving circle which includes artists who consider him a friend. Rather than a fellow artist, he is a persistent, dedicated comrade, invited out of pity to participate in an exhibition which leads to his fame and fortune. (He becomes famous, not for his ability to paint, but through the contamination brought to artistic appreciation by powerful outside forces, such as politics and the bourgeoisie). Once launched on his career, Grassou continues to be frugal, but he is also generous. When Joseph Bridau is pursued by creditors, he seeks money from Grassou, who willingly provides it. Joseph circulates the gift back by working on Virginie's portrait and offering advice about it. Grassou is the one with the money, but Joseph's behaviour is far from obsequious: he scorns Grassou for painting a portrait of a bourgeois and criticizes Grassou's use of colour. Grassou accepts this abrupt treatment because he reveres Joseph both as an artist and as a friend. He respects Joseph as "[u]n grand artiste" (G 1108) who is offering constructive criticism. Joseph's "Je ne te remercie pas!" (G 1108) upon receipt of the money--funds he requested--becomes a compliment as will be shown later in the rules governing the flow of gifts among the members of *le Cénacle* in *Illusions perdues*: the resources of everyone are available to help any individual in the closed circle amongst whom the gift circulates, and giving thanks is tantamount to an insult. Grassou is not part of *le Cénacle*, but Joseph, in displaying similar behaviour toward him, renders him an equivalent friend at least on the level of gift exchange. Other examples of gift moving between Grassou and true artists include the advice which artists, such as Schinner and Joseph, give him about paintings he prepares for sale and recommendations Grassou gives others which help them with their work. Although he has not been endowed with the gift, he contributes through his suggestions to its development in others. He does this on another level when he purchases the masterpieces of destitute artists, thereby providing them with the financial resources necessary to continue their work. He is particularly generous here since he does not allow the scorn they show for his work to interfere with his appreciation of their talent and the flow of the gift in their direction. He benefits at the same time from this patronage because he uses these purchases to gradually eradicate those paintings (that is, his own) which degrade his father-in-law's collection that will one day pass to him. In effect, this patron is shaping his own future collection into one of the utmost quality.

* * *

In *La cousine Bette*, Célestin Crevel is another patron or a would-be patron who parallels Boissaux and Vervelle as a depiction of what goes wrong in the domain of art when it comes into contact with bourgeois values. While Josépha has magnificent works from which the gift of artists, such as Rembrandt and Titien, radiates, Crevel has portraits of himself and his family by "Pierre Grassou, le peintre en renom dans la bourgeoisie, à qui Crevel devait le ridicule de son attitude byronienne" (CB 157). The narrator mocks "toute cette richesse de café qui, certes, eût fait hausser les épaules à un véritable artiste" (CB 157) and deplores the bourgeoisie's incapability of embellishing Paris with art because of its lack of taste and unwillingness to spend the money that is required; the bourgeois's aim is a combination of ostentation and bargain hunting rather than a genuine interest in art in and for itself. For instance, " Crevel . . . voulait se rendre célèbre parmi les Mécènes parisiens dont l'amour pour les arts consiste à chercher des pièces de vingt francs pour des pièces de vingt sous" (CB 320); that is, he wants the glory and honour of a recognized patron of the arts but is not prepared to spend the money that quality art merits. Nothing distinguishes Crevel's apartment "qui regorgeait de toutes les belles choses vulgaires que procure l'argent" (CB 158), and the same applies to the mansion which Grindot would render splendid if Crevel's bourgeois habits did not restrict him: "Mais Crevel, incapable de comprendre les arts, avait voulu, comme tous les bourgeois, dépenser une somme fixe, connue à l'avance. . . . L'hôtel de Crevel était donc un magnifique spécimen du luxe des sots, comme l'hôtel de Josépha le plus beau modèle d'une habitation d'artiste" (CB 398). Whereas Josépha is surrounded by many unique and original items which are priceless, Crevel has copies that are found elsewhere; it is like an opposition between the creativity which gives art its distinctiveness and the duplication of mass production that erases it.

In *Les paysans* (1855), the bourgeoisie's attempts at science are another target for derision when Gourdon is considered a philanthropist who merits a marble bust and a museum in his name. He is "la gloire de Soulanges" (P 265) as a result of bequeathing his huge collection of common minerals, animals, butterflies and other insects to the town. Normally, these items would be ignored but have become important here because they must be viewed through a protective glass and form part of Gourdon's will: the ordinary is thus rendered exceptional by an ignorant, misguided bourgeoisie. One of the poems by Gourdon's brother, who is esteemed as "un des grands poètes de la Bourgogne" (P 266), undergoes similar ridicule from the narrator. A poet who is pitied and criticized by Gourdon's brother is the man of true talent. The bourgeois have a need to glorify but are unable to distinguish what is worthy of honour and what merits their financial support.

* * *

At the beginning of *Les paysans*, Blondet expresses concern over the lack of funding available to artists who formerly enjoyed the gifts of the rich: "comment ne comprend-on pas que les merveilles de l'Art sont impossibles dans un pays sans grandes fortunes, sans grandes existences assurées? Si la Gauche veut absolument tuer les rois, qu'elle nous laisse quelques petits princes, grands comme rien du tout!" (P 58). Near the end of the novel, he is penniless and contemplates suicide just before wealthy madame de Montcornet rescues him through marriage.

Lucien, in *Illusions perdues* (1843), is another example of an artist who occupies an extremely tenuous position in the early nineteenth-century society as represented in the novels. Lucien, the poet, is admitted into the highest levels of Angoulême's nobility while many wealthy bourgeois are excluded, but he is never truly accepted by this group. Few show any appreciation for poetry; the majority chat rather than listening and express displeasure when informed that he is reading published works written by Chénier. When Lucien is mocked by the bishop and others, Mme de Bargeton comes to his defence, but flaws quickly become apparent in Lucien's protectress. Despite an excellent education (a gift from a priest who receives shelter from her father during the Revolution), her desire for status in society ranks higher than her love of literature or of Lucien. Initially, he sees her as "une bienfaitrice qui allait s'occuper de lui maternellement" (IP 169) and then as a lover whom he hopes to marry one day, but she treats him as a possession. Lucien is "son poète" (IP 170) whom she publicly displays and who writes poetry for her when she requests it. She prompts him to appear strongly religious and royalist and to adopt his mother's maiden name of nobility because she believes that this will lead to his success--and thus increase the value of her possession. (Later the same urging is meant to bring about his demise when she seeks vengeance.) Mme de Bargeton insists that Lucien accompany her to Paris, but she quickly distances herself from him when it appears that her association with him will hinder her own advancement. The flow of gifts is thus halted since it could lead to Mme de Bargeton's own exclusion from the nobility, rather than Lucien's elevation to it.

Lucien's second fickle patron is the marquise d'Espard, who promises him a dinner engagement in order for him to make some of the contacts necessary to succeed in the literary world. (The inference is that talent is not enough.) She quickly deserts the poet when she is informed that he is the son of a pharmacist and has merely usurped the title of de Rubempré. If he is not a member of the nobility, success must come before she will recognize the poet. Later, her offer to help him gain the king's accreditation for his title is not sincere but aimed at luring him into the royalist camp where he will be destroyed.

Another character who appears to be a patron of the arts is the publisher Dauriat, but once again (as with Mme de Bargeton and the marquise), self-interest takes precedence over any aid: "Je ne suis pas ici pour être le marchepied des gloires à venir, mais pour gagner de l'argent et pour en donner aux hommes célèbres" (IP 367). He is a risk averse, brusque businessman, not an encouraging sponsor of budding literary talent. He launches into a tirade against poetry because it is unlikely to generate revenue, but he later offers Lucien a significant payment for the collection of poems he previously railed against. Lucien becomes "*son* poète" (IP 453) as Dauriat outwardly continues "de passer plutôt pour un Mécène que pour un libraire" (IP 453). The real motive behind Dauriat's actions is profit. He purchases Lucien's poems to buy his silence in order to prevent the loss of money which he would incur if Lucien's attacks in the newspaper continued. He does not read the poetry, nor does he have any intention of ever publishing it.

* * *

The first time that Mme de Bargeton abandons Lucien he reflects upon the remedy to his predicament: "de l'or à tout prix! . . . l'or est la seule puissance devant laquelle ce monde s'agenouille. Non! lui cria sa conscience, mais la gloire, et la gloire c'est le travail! . . . je triompherai!" (IP 287). Two things are significant in his appraisal of the situation. One is that his first thought is about money, the dominating force which permeates everything in his society--a force that he cannot resist in the end. The other is that his conscience tells him that instead of pursuing money, he should concentrate his efforts on developing the gift of literary talent with which he has been endowed. This route will not only bring him fame but hopefully wealth which continues to be important to Lucien.

In selecting the second option, Lucien has Daniel d'Arthez as a role model and guide. In d'Arthez, Balzac has constructed a mythical literary genius whose dedication to his work and friends involves unequivocal giving. It is d'Arthez and his group of colleagues, *le Cénacle*, that stand in contrast to the pecuniary elements in the novel and offer a strong resistance to strictly monetary pursuits. *Le Cénacle* emphasizes collectivity and helping members of the group rather than the self-interest and monetary pursuits rampant in their society. In *Illusions perdues*, jealousy and destructive rivalry repeatedly surface among the characters. Nathan, the novelist, swears loyalty to Lucien ("je suis à vous à la vie, à la mort, et n'oublierai jamais ce que vous avez fait cette semaine pour moi" [IP 473]), but Nathan and Lousteau are not trustworthy. They oscillate between being Lucien's enemies and his friends depending on how they assess the personal benefits of the current circumstances. When Lucien reads a few of his sonnets to Lousteau, the narrator comments: "le silence et la brusquerie en pareille circonstance trahissent la jalousie que cause une belle oeuvre, de même que leur admiration annonce le plaisir inspiré par une oeuvre médiocre qui rassure leur amour-propre" (IP 339). Such an attitude does not favour the advancement of the gift since no encouragement and aid are extended to nurture it (areas in which d'Arthez and *le Cénacle* excel). Lousteau admits in this case that Lucien has talent, but he strongly recommends that Lucien choose journalism because of the lack of money to be made from literature. Later, Finot (a major newspaper owner) makes Lucien an attractive offer but cautions him to maintain silence about their arrangement because he fears repercussions from the jealousy of other journalists. Lucien's talent is actually worth more than what Finot offers; he is exploited by the corrupt world of journalism. In the end, Lucien's talent contributes to his destruction. Rather than defending Lucien as d'Arthez would, Finot, Lousteau and their associates come to fear Lucien's superiority and conspire to eliminate him.

D'Arthez befriends Lucien and offers him membership in the protective giving environment of *le Cénacle*. Lucien, however, fails with this group largely as a result of his inability to participate in the free exchange of gifts. For example, when Lucien needs money, the members of the closed circle provide it, but they are offended by the haste with which Lucien returns their money: from their point of view, he rejects the bonds connected with the gift that they have given. Comments from the group, such as "Tu as manqué de confiance en nous" (IP 321), "Si tu nous aimais comme nous nous aimons, aurais-tu mis tant d'empressement et tant d'emphase à nous rendre ce que nous avions tant de plaisir à te donner?" (IP 325) and "On ne se prête rien ici, on se donne" (IP 325), demonstrate Lucien's egoism and vanity and indicate that the group feels rejected. The sentiment of the majority is that Lucien is ill-suited to the collective values and what the narrator terms their "beauté morale" (IP 319). Lucien, in effect, transforms an intended gift into a commercial exchange. While Lucien at this point wants to be part of the group his actions are similar to those of Rastignac who spurns any ties with Vautrin by repaying his money as quickly as possible as shown in Chapter 2. Vautrin's words to Rastignac ("On dirait que vous avez peur de me devoir quelque chose?" [PG 133]) are a direct parallel to those expressed by the group to Lucien: "On dirait que tu as peur de nous devoir quelque chose" (IP 324). For the gift to function as intended, a delay must ensue before the recipient returns the gift; that is, the receiver must remain obligated to the giver for a period during which the social bonds are allowed to incubate and become operative. Too swift a return suggests a commercial transaction as opposed to an exchange of gifts.

Besides furnishing material assistance to Lucien, *le Cénacle* help him with his writing; the group's revisions significantly improve Lucien's novel. D'Arthez writes the novel's preface, but Lucien does not give him the credit when Petit-Claud (a solicitor collaborating with Lucien's enemies) praises it. Lucien is thankful for what the group has done but misunderstands the dynamics of the group: "--Des remerciements! Pour qui nous prends-tu? dit Bianchon. --Le plaisir a été pour nous, reprit Fulgence" (IP 420). The group members are committed to serving one another as a collectivity to which no thanks is due; by thanking them Lucien remains an outsider, instead of becoming an integrated group member.

* * *

Recognizing Lucien's vulnerability to what they consider "un enfer, un abîme d'iniquités, de mensonges, de trahisons" (IP 327), *le Cénacle's* members try to persuade him to stay clear of journalism and follow their example of integrity and hard work aimed at developing the particular gift with which each has been endowed and to which each has dedicated his life. Lucien is lured by the sensual pleasures and easy money that he sees are to be had as a journalist; he drifts from the principles of d'Arthez and *le Cénacle* which increasingly appear to him as "vertus ennuyeuses . . . inutiles" (IP 415-16). Lucien believes that he can have the best of both worlds--the amusing life of a journalist plus literary success--but the group is correct in its prediction that he cannot. In joining the journalists, he abandons the gift. He is still called a poet in the later chapters of *Illusions perdues* and when he appears in *Splendeurs et misères des courtisanes*, but it is a misnomer: he has forsaken the onerous task of nurturing his poetic ability in favour of the pursuit of wealth and social status. Initially, he believes that he is positioning himself to be able to promote d'Arthez's novel when it is published, but events prove that he is deceiving himself; he is ordered to choose between writing an article aimed at destroying his friend or losing the paper's support of Coralie. It is here that Balzac reinforces d'Arthez's image as a devoted friend capable of unbelievable largesse: he comforts Lucien and revises the negative article written by Lucien about d'Arthez. The fidelity of d'Arthez, in contrast to the fickleness of Lucien's fellow journalists, is displayed again at Coralie's funeral; the journalists are absent in his time of need, whereas all of *le Cénacle* attend, except one member.

Lousteau and his associates respond later to Lucien's urgent request from Angoulême for clothing, but what they provide is different from the gifts previously supplied by *le Cénacle*. First, Lucien has to plead with Lousteau, whereas *le Cénacle* gives spontaneously. Secondly, it is a matter of a debt, the repayment of money loaned (not given) to Lousteau by Lucien; in the case of *le Cénacle*, there is never a question of anyone owing money but the obligation to ensure the gift circulates to benefit the members of the closed circle. Thirdly, *le Cénacle* has Lucien's genuine welfare in mind; for example, they try to convince him that he will not be able to survive if he switches to the royalist group. Lousteau and his "friends", on the other hand, put self-interest first. The articles they give are a form of insurance to protect them from the possibility of Lucien's career rebounding; that is, they are attempting to subdue a potentially hostile element.

Balzac created a hierarchy among the writers in *Illusions perdues*: at the top, an elite few, such as d'Arthez, set an example of the way it should be; at the degenerate base, the majority, including Lucien and Lousteau, surrender to pecuniary forces. (In effect, they relinquish the gift which showed so much promise.) The distinction between the morality of *le Cénacle* and the journalists is clear. The former value hard work, whereas Lousteau advises Lucien otherwise: "travailler n'est pas le secret de la fortune en littérature, il s'agit d'exploiter le travail d'autrui" (IP 346). Lucien is incapable of differentiating between the sincere friendship of d'Arthez and the manipulation of Lousteau: "Lousteau . . . résolut de rester l'ami de Lucien et de s'entendre avec Finot pour exploiter un nouveau venu si dangereux en le maintenant dans le besoin" (IP 402). Members of *le Cénacle* help and encourage one another, providing a vision of the ideal. In contrast, the treachery of the journalists indicates what happens when money becomes the most important thing in society. As Lucien says: "à Paris . . . on y vend tout, on y fabrique tout, même le succès" (IP 470).

The subordination of women, who may be given in the guise of gift, or who may receive what is labeled as a gift, but who, in fact, have become prostitutes whether within or outside of marriage, is discussed in Chapter 1. Authors seem to submit themselves to a similar process as shown by the obsequious behaviour of Nathan, the talented novelist, who subordinates himself to Dauriat, the publisher: "À l'aspect d'un poète éminent y prostituant la muse à un journaliste, y humiliant l'Art, comme la Femme était humiliée . . . le grand homme de province recevait des enseignements terribles. L'argent! était le mot de toute énigme" (IP 365). Publishers and journalists determine the fate of an author, rather than his talent. (A similar example appears in *Le rouge et le noir* when M. Sinclair, a great poet, is excessively subservient in order to win favour with those who can gain him admittance to the *Académie*.)

As Lousteau explains, publishers are driven by the profit motive just like any other merchant: "pour ces libraires, les livres étaient comme des bonnets de coton pour des bonnetiers, une marchandise à vendre cher, à acheter bon marché" (IP 303). They are not interested in helping anyone and do not view literature as having any intrinsic value; for them, literature is a commodity through which they can become wealthy. Dauriat (who is discussed above) and Doguereau exemplify this in *Illusions perdues*. Doguereau believes that an author must be kept destitute to prevent the diversion of his literary creativity to idle pursuits. (The author no longer would serve as a source of revenue.) That is why Doguereau considers offering Lucien a price for his work which is beneath its fair market value, and then when he discovers the subsistence level at which Lucien is currently living, he lowers the amount by another sixty percent. Doguereau's assessment of the situation is very accurate: once Lucien gets a chance to escape poverty, he deserts his literary career; money then takes precedence over developing the gift to be passed on in the form of poetry and novels. The gift and wealth are mutually exclusive elements in Lucien's case; money stifles the gift within him.

Lucien passes from the domain of the morally responsible artist (d'Arthez) to the unethical depravity of Lousteau who has also renounced the gift within. Lousteau does not hesitate to write reviews of books that he has never read or to attack novels and plays worthy of merit in order to destroy them. At first, the naïve Lucien does not want to criticize Nathan's novel (which he considers a masterpiece), and then he questions why he should reverse course and praise the same novel. (Lousteau explains to him that his own literary career could be damaged by Nathan if he does not.) Lucien moves further and further from the principles of d'Arthez; he writes an article to destroy a good play just to see if he has this power. His attempt is foiled when his article is altered to save the play; but the journalists do not act out of honesty: they do not want to risk interrupting the flow of bribes from the theatre. Lucien is caught up in the world he earlier described, in which "tout se résolvait par de l'argent. Au Théâtre comme en Librairie, en Librairie comme au Journal, de l'art et de la gloire, il n'en était pas question. Ces coups du grand balancier de la Monnaie" (IP 378-79).

When Lucien moves to the royalist paper, Coralie's career as an actress plummets because she no longer has the support of the major papers. Lucien hires Braulard, a professional "clapper", to applaud her, but Braulard betrays him; he knows that Lucien's resources are limited and therefore supports the liberal camp. Lucien's switch to the royalist camp and Braulard's deception have nothing to do with their political beliefs; their actions are based solely upon self-interest.[4] Coralie's failure is precipitated by influences beyond her control, not from a lack of talent. Coralie generously helps Florine by securing a role for her, but Florine victimizes her and the gift does not flow back to Coralie. The theatrical triumph goes to "Florine, fille aussi dangereuse, aussi dépravée déjà que son amie était simple et généreuse" (IP 527). This is another example of the rivalry between women which is discussed in Chapter 1; women are in competition with one another as they battle against the forces in society that slot them as inferior by the males who control the money. Coralie, in effect, is unsuccessful in her career because she is honest about her love for Lucien and deserts Camusot, the rich bourgeois who withdraws the financial backing necessary for her success.

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[4] Another "intrigant" (B 99) who switches to the royalist camp in an attempt to win favour with those in power is Grindot, the architect hired by César Birotteau. Although he has already won the main prize in his field and pours his best artistic effort into his work, he appears to have been contaminated by the bourgeoisie which he scorns. The narrator reveals the hypocrisy of the artist, when he comes in search of payment from César, "entrant avec cet air dégagé que prennent les artistes pour parler des intérêts auxquels ils se prétendent absolument étrangers" (B 186). Monetary interests are supposedly foreign to the artist, but in Grindot's case they are given a high priority. In originally doing the work for Birotteau, his main aim--rather than being artistic expression--is to make contacts which will launch him in his career and bring him fame and fortune.

Coralie gives abundantly to Lucien and has the intention of helping him, but their open and loving relationship is actually detrimental to Lucien's social advancement. The gift possessed by the talented female performer has a denigrating effect since she is denied any respectability, and rather than elevating Lucien, the movement is reversed. The negative consequences of associating with a performer are also seen in Stendhal's Féder who is disowned by his father when he marries Amélie, an actress. Neither Amélie's nor Coralie's other qualities are relevant to their society. Expressing their gift of theatrical artistry for the benefit of others pushes them to the margins of society. Lucien realizes that the great social gulf that separates a mistress such as Blondet's Mme de Montcornet from Coralie is similar to the gap between the young actress and a street prostitute. At this point, de Marsay advises that, although the actress was helpful in launching Lucien, she is now harmful, and he needs to make a conquest in the upper levels of society. De Marsay suggests mademoiselle des Touches, but Mme de Bargeton, attracted once more to a Lucien returned to the centre of attention, is a more likely candidate. Her renewed love quickly turns to vengeance when Lucien does not renounce Coralie for her.

In spite of Mme de Bargeton's past betrayals, Lucien sees her as a patron of the upper nobility who will be instrumental in launching him; his sister Ève has an opposite opinion. His excessive gullibility makes him easy prey to the manoeuvres of his enemies. When Petit-Claud writes a newspaper article and gathers a group of paid employees to serenade him as Angoulême's poet, he accepts it as an honour resulting from his talent. He dismisses Ève's suspicions even though her reasoning is strong: why should he suddenly be so famous when his poetry has not yet been published? Rather than analyze the situation rationally, Lucien attributes his family's comments and changed perspective towards him to the social distance which he feels separates them: his family's fate is to remain bourgeois while he sees himself as destined to rise in the nobility.

A diagram of the main flow of gifts with regard to Lucien in *Illusions perdues* is shown below:[5]

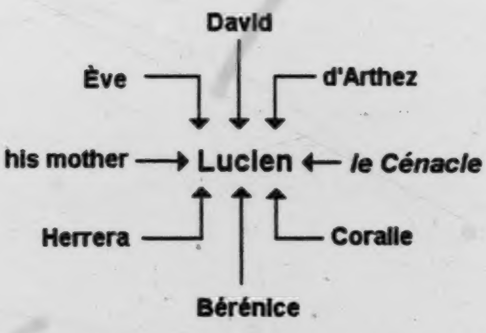

Figure 5: Lucien: uni-directional gift flow

The direction of the flow is typically inward towards Lucien with very little if anything ever flowing back from him. For example, although David generously gives to him, he is against his sister's marriage to David. His social status will be hurt by the union, whereas he feels another marriage alliance for his sister might advance him socially. Early in the novel, the narrator comments: "l'habitude qu'il avait de se voir l'objet des efforts secrets de ces trois êtres [David, Ève, sa mère] . . . lui donnaient les vices de l'enfant de famille, engendraient en lui cet égoïsme qui dévore le noble" (IP 185). Little changes throughout *Illusions perdues* for "cet enfant gâté" (IP 566) or in *Splendeurs et misères des courtisanes*, where Lucien remains the gift-recipient of Herrera, and Esther is added to the list of givers as seen in the preceding chapter. Rather than the gifts benefiting Lucien as intended, they seem to extinguish the spirit of the gift. The more that is given to Lucien, the more self-centred he becomes. In fact, one of the rare moments that Lucien gives is when he is penniless after Coralie's death; he forces himself to write jovial songs to obtain funds for her burial. Only when the giving is halted in his direction is he jolted into making a repayment. For the most part, he is lulled into a complacency in which he expects the gift to keep flowing in his direction. There are only brief periods in which he attempts to develop the poetic gift harboured within him before he capitulates to the decadence offered first by journalism and then by Herrera.

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[5] Bérénice is Coralie's maid, who prostitutes herself (after the young woman's death) in order to get money for Lucien's trip home.

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A predecessor of Lucien Chardon de Rubempré appears in the form of Raphaël de Valentin in Balzac's *La peau de chagrin* (1831). Raphaël, like Lucien, goes through cycles of wealth and poverty and equates wealth with happiness, but in the end, he finds only monetary riches. Each harbours the gift within and each, during his initial period of poverty on his own in Paris, dedicates his efforts to developing his talent in the hope that fame and fortune will result. Lucien shows an early integrity concerning the articles against and for Nathan's novel, and so too does Raphaël when he tells Rastignac that he will not defame his family name by attaching that of his aunt to memoirs that he is writing for Finot, a man whom Rastignac describes as "décoré pour avoir publié des ouvrages qu'il ne comprend pas" (PC 165). The contaminating effects of money can be seen in these incidents in which society honours an individual who is not worthy, and yet a highly principled young writer is forced to compromise his principles because of financial need. Limits exist, however, to the extent to which Raphaël will go. Although he accepts Finot's advance for the memoirs (intending not to put his aunt's name on it once complete), Raphaël cannot bring himself to lead the parasitic life extolled by Rastignac.

Despite his frugal lifestyle, Raphaël has accumulated debts and consents to Finot's proposal to get money to pay them. Whereas Lucien is unconcerned with debts unless he is actively pursued, Raphaël has the opposite attitude: "Devoir, est-ce donc s'appartenir? . . . pour un homme généreux, une dette est l'enfer . . . Une dette impayée est la bassesse, un commencement de friponnerie" (PC 199, 201). Raphaël's aversion to debt drives him to contemplate suicide before he owes anything near the amount dissipated by Lucien. Raphaël and Lucien give precedence to wealth over the gift, which seems increasingly relegated to a means to wealth, rather than being of value itself. Poverty appears to be a prerequisite for any intense development of the gift, while wealth extinguishes the impetus. When Raphaël becomes rich from his share of the money Rastignac wins gambling, he leads a life of dissipation that excludes the gift, and he (like Lucien) never returns to nurture the gift.

Prior to the gambling windfall, Raphaël begins to associate with Foedora, a woman whom he hopes will rescue him from his woes as a writer. Rastignac explains the power of those who gather at Foedora's: "Quand ces gens ont adopté un livre, le livre devient à la mode; s'il est réellement bon, ils ont donné quelque brevet de génie sans le savoir" (PC 145). For success in the literary field, making contacts with influential people is more important than expressing the gift in a work. Sponsorship appears devoid of any critical analysis concerning the worth of the literature; it is merely by accident if anything of merit is successful in the market. In addition, Raphaël views Foedora as a commodity; he aspires to marry her for her wealth, even before he meets her. Foedora is too self-centred and loves her independence too much to marry anyone, let alone someone beneath her financial level. Raphaël, the narrator, shows Foedora as a heartless woman who spurns him despite his sacrifices. From another perspective, Foedora represents a resistance to the patriarchal forces in society which would subordinate her as they do other women in the early nineteenth-century society represented in the novels discussed in the first chapter. Rather than serving as an object of use to a man, she reverses the normal situation and surrounds herself with males who never progress past a platonic relationship with her. Raphaël becomes a plaything for her amusement, and he is probably correct when he hypothesizes: "Foedora vît [sic] en moi quelque célébrité prochaine, et voulût [sic] augmenter sa ménagerie de savants" (PC 150). Raphaël also becomes "un moyen" (PC 173) that Foedora uses to make contact with one of his relatives. Whereas Raphaël believes he is a consultant whom she is taking into her confidence, both she and his relative treat him with scorn because of his poverty.

Two perspectives can be taken with respect to the relationship between Raphaël and Foedora: the first is that Raphaël objectifies Foedora as a wealthy prize, while he hides behind a cover of passion; the second is that Foedora only momentarily expresses any sympathy for him before resuming her coldness towards him despite the sacrifices he has made for her. For each perspective, Foedora diverts Raphaël's efforts from the gift. Although he continues to write during this initial period of poverty, courting Foedora drains much of his energy and money that could have been devoted to his creativity. Upon his return to poverty, after the spendthrift period following Rastignac's gambling success, Raphaël uses the woman who was to help him with his literary career as the reason for not returning "à la paisible existence du savant" (PC 201). As Raphaël's confidence grows in his ability to obtain whatever he desires, rather than continuing with his goal to obtain Foedora, he wishes to forget her. His love for Foedora thus seems to last only as long as his avidity for her fortune.

Whereas Foedora suffocates the gift in Raphaël, Pauline, the other young woman in his life, nurtures it by giving to him. Pauline and her mother supplement his diet and his income to the extent that without their help Raphaël would not have made it through the initial period of poverty during which he produced his potentially great work, *Théorie de la volonté*. Raphaël recognizes their kindness and enters into an exchange with them; for example, he provides Pauline with music lessons and formal instruction, which her mother wants but cannot afford. His gratitude even swells to giving his valuable piano to Pauline and telling her that she may have the rest of his possessions if he does not return within six months. He seems less generous, however, if we consider, first, that he had been contemplating suicide because of the state of his finances, and secondly, that no gifts flow from him to Pauline when Rastignac enriches him. In this, he shows he is less generous than Pauline, who is willing to give him everything that she has when she is poor and later when she becomes wealthy. Pauline's giving even extends to trying to kill herself in an effort to save Raphaël while he, on the other hand, limits their relationship to prolong his life. It is an opposition between quality and quantity: Pauline favours quality and Raphaël favours quantity. In the end, it is the physical longing for Pauline's body that propels him to his death, not the desire for a loving, giving relationship.

Raphaël demonstrates the most generosity before he experiences poverty and during his intervals of indigence. First, he sacrifices what he receives as inheritance from his mother to save his father from the shame of bankruptcy, even though it means the end of the opulent life to which he was accustomed. Then during his initial state of financial need, a giving relationship develops between Raphaël and Pauline (and her mother). Later, at the end of the second poverty period when he has resolved to commit suicide, he gives his last coins to two beggars who ironically promise to pray for the extension of the life of this giver who just wants to finish with it as soon as possible.

The degree to which Raphaël becomes self-centred when wealthy is reflected in his question about his old teacher: "quand tous les Porriquet du monde mourraient de faim, qu'est-ce que cela me ferait? . . . Plus de bienfaisantes pensées! plus d'amour! plus rien!" (PC 219-20). Raphaël has blocked himself off from caring about others but partially redeems himself in the scene by conceding that at least he has helped a worthy man. However, had Raphaël devoted some thought to others instead of operating in a totally inward-reflecting void, the gift he inadvertently gives would not have had such a catastrophic effect upon him. At Aix, he gives to the other patients but stops when he witnesses their ingratitude for his dinner parties and the loan of his horses. His wealth stirs their jealousy, and his gifts wound their pride. Bonds cannot form between Raphaël and the other patients because Raphaël's superior wealth renders the giving uni-directional. The group, which has accepted remuneration for its company, never truly accepts Raphaël and ostracizes him when his gifts/payments stop.

The French words *la peau de chagrin* may be translated either as leather made from a type of donkey or else as a skin of sorrow. In Balzac's novel, where it is supposed to represent life, it has the double meaning of the animal skin talisman and grief, but it is perhaps Raphaël's handling of the situation which creates the woe. First of all, he receives it as a gift--the old merchant does not sell it to him--but rather than keep the gift moving, he becomes "une sorte d'automate" (PC 217) withdrawing to a state which is more akin to mere existence than anything resembling a full life. As the narrator comments: "Le monde lui appartenait, il pouvait tout et ne voulait plus rien" (PC 209) and then later "Raphaël avait pu tout faire, il n'avait rien fait" (PC 276). Initially, he is going to do so much with his life ("Je lutterai avec la fièvre jaune, bleue, verte, avec les armées, avec les échafauds" [PC 203]), but he does nothing in these areas; nor does he do anything for the arts. Previously, he bemoans being "un véritable zéro social" (PC 66) despite his talent, yet now he does not undertake any action to rectify the injustice with which the artist is treated, nor does he further develop his writing ability. Once again the gift of the artist appears only to flourish or to be nurtured when it encounters an obstacle. Balzac himself often wrote to pay off his creditors which leaves the possibility that had he been wealthy, he may have written less.

The old dealer who gives the talisman to Raphaël is excessively wealthy. His establishment is so cluttered with costly items, such as objects of gold and priceless paintings by great masters, that their value is lost because of overabundance. The narrator describes "[des] richesses resplendissant d'or et d'argent . . . entassées. . . . des chefs-d'oeuvre accumulés à faire prendre en haine les arts et à tuer l'enthousiasme" (PC 73-74). The plethora of what is typically held in awe has erased the uniqueness and splendour of the items. Raphaël accepts what the merchant offers because he is poor and disillusioned; his writing has not earned enough money to feed him, let alone make him wealthy. The possibility of wealth squelches his desire for suicide (as does Herrera's offer of the same to Lucien), so that when the merchant tells him his suicide has only been delayed, he regards the gift as a curse and wishes one in turn on the old man: "je désire . . . que vous tombiez amoureux d'une danseuse! vous comprendrez alors le bonheur d'une débauche, et peut-être deviendrez-vous prodigue de tous les biens que vous avez si philosophiquement ménagés" (PC 88). While it is meant as a curse, since the riches the old man has amassed over the years will be wasted from his capitalistic perspective, the reverse happens. The idea is a precursor of Georges Bataille's lauding of expenditure--as opposed to accumulation--as the source of joy.[6] The anti-gift intended by Raphaël becomes the gift flowing back to the old merchant, who finds happiness in his dissipation with Euphrasie, happiness that he never knew previously.

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Balzac's earlier artists, such as Raphaël de Valentin, Lucien Chardon and Joseph Bridau, have confidence in their talent and believe they will succeed, but Steinbock, in *La cousine Bette* (1846), seems less certain. He is a sculptor who definitely has the gift, but for the most part, it remains trapped within him. Raphaël and Lucien demonstrate energy and an ability to temporarily apply themselves in their attic room that is never evinced by Steinbock. Likewise, Joseph Bridau's persistence and dedication to develop the gift and pass it on forms an acute contrast with Steinbock's lethargy. According to the narrator: "[l]e travail constant est la loi de l'art . . . car l'art, c'est la création idéalisée. . . . les grands artistes . . . enfantent . . . toujours. Il en résulte cette habitude du labeur . . . qui les maintient en concubinage avec la Muse, avec ses forces créatrices" (CB 246). Steinbock only leaves his indolent state under Lisbeth's tyrannical rule or when he receives a jolt from a new-found love. Steinbock has a parasitic relationship with Lisbeth, and this quickly turns into an unhappy situation for the artist. Lisbeth does not appreciate art in and for itself which she shows when, instead of treasuring Steinbock's creation, she prefers Adeline's old cashmere that (although worn) represents membership in the wealthy class. The masterpieces the artist creates are seen by her as mere products to be sold in the market place.

Later Hortense makes excuses for Steinbock's unproductiveness (caused largely by sloth) by saying how he needs to be given creative freedom, rather than having his work dictated to him. Still, an element of truth exists in her defence of Steinbock. It is the bourgeoisie with its money who specifies what art is and would turn the artist into a tradesman--an accurate assessment of how Lisbeth views Steinbock. The novel echoes what Balzac wrote in an 1830 newspaper article: "Les gens du monde se figurent qu'un artiste peut régulièrement créer, comme un garçon de bureau époussette tous les matins les papiers de ses employés."[7] The creation of art requires an indefinite amount of time as opposed to other chores/products which can be set to a timetable. While Lisbeth would permeate Steinbock with a drive resembling Weber's Protestant work ethic and wants to see him constantly churning out salable items, he assigns a high value to leisure. Life is not worth living if he has no time for amusement, and he does not accept Lisbeth's opinion that ample opportunities for fun will materialize once he has established himself as a recognized artist; he argues that he may not live that long.

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[6] Georges Bataille, *La part maudite* précédé de "La notion de dépense" (1949, 1933; Paris: Minuit, 1967); see in particular 95-97, 224.

While a break from work may rejuvenate the artist's creativity, in the case of Steinbock, the period becomes overly prolonged and is marked by lethargy. When he first meets Hortense, the love he feels kindles his creativity, and he produces works of artistic perfection; but the initial inspiration soon fades, and his love for Hortense (though strong) seems to lull him into inactivity rather than stimulating his talent. The work he produces, which has been commissioned by the government to honour Moncornet, is a disaster--an indication that, in Steinbock's case, the tranquil existence of family life stifles the gift. Although the artist Stidmann offers Steinbock encouragement, guidance and protection, another segment of the artistic community remains hostile, and Hortense attributes the disparaging comments of Steinbock's competitors to a desire to capture work directed towards her husband. The importance of pleasing "l'Institut" (CB 241) and those who control funding is also evident when Steinbock risks losing everything if he does not produce a successful sculpture within a year. Steinbock's gift only appears once more--the Dalila which he makes for Valérie with whom he has fallen in love. Though he remains fascinated with Valérie, she (like Hortense) ceases to give the impetus needed for his art. (When he returns to his wife, the gift is largely extinguished in him, but he is consulted by art lovers who consider him competent to recognize the gift in others because of his past successes.)

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[7] Honoré de Balzac, "Des artistes," *Oeuvres complètes de Balzac*, Tome 22: *Oeuvres diverses* (Paris: Club de l'honnête homme, 1956) 224.

The Scientist

Overall, in the novels that I have selected for study, the scientists show more devotion to using their abilities to the utmost than do those with writing talent, such as Lucien and Raphaël, or with an artistic gift, such as Steinbock. The experimental scientists, whom Raphaël consults in an effort to enlarge the talisman, are totally immersed in their work. For example, Planchette "ne pensait ni à la gloire, ni au monde, ni à lui-même et vivait dans la science pour la science" (PC 243). None of them knows Raphaël, and yet each shows a marked interest in helping him which seems to stem from a curiosity in science or a desire to demonstrate a scientific principle. When Raphaël promises great financial rewards to Planchette and to those who have contributed to the scientific world in general, the scientist calmly comments on how this would be useful. The fact that his level of enthusiasm for the project remains unchanged underscores the detachment of this scientist with regard to pecuniary pursuits.

Another man of science who is totally absorbed in his work is Balthazar Claës, in *La recherche de l'absolu* (1834). While other generations of Claës had a mania for collecting objects, such as paintings, china, silverware and tulips, Balthazar is obsessed with scientific research which takes over his whole life: "il n'était ni mari, ni père, ni citoyen, il fut chimiste" (RA 746). For example, he is unaware of the gravity of his beloved wife's illness, a condition precipitated by his spending on experiments. Although his great wealth initially places him in the enviable position of the gifted person who is not restrained by financial considerations, this changes as Balthazar uses the treasures amassed by the previous Claës in order to pay his debts. The cycle whereby the art collection is sold, repurchased and then sold again is a reflection of the family's wealth which disappears, is reinstated and then vanishes once more while Balthazar tenaciously pursues his research. This scientist does not stop when his family's accumulated wealth is exhausted; he resembles Balzac's misers, such as Grandet, in reverse: whereas the miser has an uncontrollable drive to accumulate money, Balthazar has an irrepressible urge to make a scientific discovery, even if it eliminates his wealth.

Although at one point "le sentiment de son impuissance l'écrasa" and he is described as "[l']artiste découragé" (RA 734), this dejection quickly turns to joy, and his optimism is restored when he perceives another source of funding for his work. On at least half a dozen occasions, Balthazar expresses his belief that he is extremely close to solving the problem. Despite his promises to renounce all further undertakings, if the one last experiment he has in mind at the moment does not succeed, he seems incapable of doing so. It is not that his words are insincere, but rather he is missing the volition needed to abandon his endeavours. He is addicted to science as some people are to gambling or alcohol. It remains doubtful that his strong love for Joséphine would have been adequate to permanently remove him from his laboratory to save her life. His tears and pleas of "donne, donne!" (RA 792) to his daughter Marguerite for money, and then his preparations for suicide when she refuses are indicative of the value he places on science: without it his own life is worthless.

Balthazar transcends what is normally held in esteem--family honour and wealth. When he tries to explain how the money he has spent and the sacrifices that have resulted are insignificant considering the benefits he is on the verge of bestowing, no one believes him except Mulquinier, his servant/laboratory assistant. Mulquinier appears at first as a miser interested in enriching himself with a share of the diamonds Balthazar is going to create, but he remains faithful throughout. As the years pass, he develops into a friend who offers encouragement to the scientist and defends him against criticism from the outside. Mulquinier, alone, recognizes Balthazar as "un grand homme" (RA 832) worthy of respect; he demonstrates his conviction by twice giving him his entire life's savings--something rare for one of Balzac's misers--to enable the scientist to continue. Mulquinier is caught up in the spirit of his master's consistent and unrelenting dedication.

Rather than honouring "sa persévérance d'homme de génie" (RA 830), society scorns Balthazar, whom it sees as having wasted enormous amounts of money. Even his family, who gives little or no credence to his forecasts of fame coupled with fortune, repeatedly tries to restrain his expenditures; in the end, it is only his daughter Marguerite who once more pays his debts. In doing so, she acts to preserve his honour as well as to provide him the opportunity to solve the problem which has haunted him. Upon finding the solution, he expresses his regret that he no longer has the energy to pass it on to humanity; this regret indicates that all his efforts and sacrifices are aimed at scientific advancement. In Balthazar Claës, Balzac has created a model of the scientist whose giving is boundless. Whereas his success is limited since he cannot share his discovery, his intention is noble in contrast with the majority of his contemporaries who emphasize pecuniary accumulation.

Vauquelin, in *César Birotteau* (1837), is the dedicated, gifted man of science who (unlike Balthazar) is able to pass on knowledge. He gives the results of his research, with no desire for personal benefit, to the bourgeoisie in the form of César. It is to Vauquelin that César owes his wealth because the products which he has been so successful in selling are based on information from the scientist. (This also holds true for the oil from which Anselme makes huge and rapid profits to pay César's creditors.) César respects Vauquelin and feels a great indebtedness to the scientist whom he calls his benefactor: "le désintéressement de M. Vauquelin est une des grandes douleurs de ma vie: il est impossible de lui rien faire accepter" (B 96). The perfumer has come up with the gift of an engraving which Vauquelin wants but rejects because he sees it as a payment for services he provided without desire for remuneration; it is something which vilifies his gift of passing scientific findings to another by bringing the gift into the monetary realm. Before Vauquelin agrees to accept the engraving, César must firmly establish the exchange within the confines of the gift by assuring him that the engraving is representative of the devotion he and his family feel for the scientist and that it is meant as a reminder of their attachment. The contrast between the scientist who dissociates himself from the pecuniary and the bourgeois who actively pursues it is strong, yet this does not prevent them from establishing a relationship with one another founded upon gift, perhaps the only medium which is possible to facilitate an exchange in such a situation.

Benassis, the optimistic visionary in *Le médecin de campagne* (1833), emphasizes the importance of the person of talent and his devotion to society. According to Benassis, an effort must be made toward perfection if humanity is to progress, even though these contributions may go unnoticed: "Le génie reste pauvre en éclairant le monde, la vertu garde le silence en se sacrifiant pour le bien général" (MC 466). Gérard, in *Le curé* de *village* (1839), lucidly examines the situation of the genius in the early nineteenth-century France represented by Balzac. He knows from personal experience the great amount of effort that is required ("je me suis adonné à l'étude des sciences exactes de manière à me rendre malade" [CV 794]) and asks: "Combien, comme Pascal, sont morts prématurément, usés par la science?" (CV 795). Despite the effort and personal sacrifice made by the gifted person, society withholds monetary rewards; others, such as bookkeepers and merchants, receive more although their offering is insignificant in comparison. (M. Gros, a generous, gifted man in *Le rouge et le noir*, provides another example of the injustice with which the man of talent is treated: he is bypassed for a position in favour of a fool due to a whim of Julien's.) Society even goes so far as to thwart the contributions that talented men would otherwise make: "les Médiocrités jalouses laissent mourir de misère les penseurs, les grands médecins politiques qui ont étudié les plaies de la France, et qui s'opposent à l'esprit de leur siècle" (CV 821). Gérard also denounces the schools of his era which, rather than developing the gift, hamper it: "les sujets sortis de l'École perdent le sens de l'élégance et de l'ornement; une colonne leur semble inutile, ils reviennent au point où l'art commence, en s'en tenant à l'utile" (CV 800). According to Gérard the official system has not produced greatness, yet hope still exists because, in spite of all the obstacles, the gifted person will rise to contribute to society. Part of the function of the gift is to show its power to surmount any impediments.

* * *

Another of Balzac's scientists who struggles valiantly is David Séchard, an idealized combination of the gifted man and generous giver. His goal to obtain fame and fortune, by developing a process to make paper from vegetable products, has the ulterior motive of providing wealth to Ève and Lucien. David explains to Ève that it is his desire to give which will provide him the strength to carry out his quest: "le désir de vous enrichir vous et Lucien me donnera de la constance et de ténacité..." (IP 217). The narrator recalls David's underlying generous aim of wanting to give ("David Séchard, ce boeuf, courageux et intelligent . . . voulut faire la grande et rapide fortune qu'il avait souhaitée moins pour lui que pour Ève et pour Lucien" [IP 559]) as does David's own avowal to Petit-Claud: "Il ne s'agit pas de moi dans cette entreprise. . . . Il s'agit de Lucien et de ma femme, c'est pour eux que je travaille..." (IP 602).

David is doomed to failure in the business world since, according to the narrator, "[l]es gens généreux font de mauvais commerçants" (IP 134). David is truly generous in contrast with his miserly father Jérôme-Nicolas Séchard and his self-centred friend/brother-in-law Lucien. He allows his father to defraud him of the inheritance he should have received from his mother and also to deceive him in the sale of the printing establishment with its obsolescent technology. The financial burden imposed by old Séchard places David in an untenable situation, and when combined with what he gives Lucien, it leads to his ruin. In the beginning David hires Lucien, not because he needs his help, but to save Lucien from despair. Later, the expenditures become larger: renovations for Lucien's room; all David's available funds and a loan guarantee that Lucien needs for his Paris trip; and then, more borrowing to pay back *le Cénacle*. The final gift, which completely bankrupts David and results in his imprisonment, is his acceptance of the responsibility for the payment of the notes that Lucien forges with his signature. David clings to the hope that he will perfect the paper fabrication process and that everything will be saved by the ensuing wealth. Here the power of money is seen as the cure for all by a character for whom money means nothing, except in relation to giving. For example, he predicts that the wealth he plans to share with Lucien will eliminate the negative sentiment which Ève shows towards her brother: "Une fois Lucien riche, mon ange, il n'aura que des vertus" (IP 582).

David is prevented from achieving his goal by the Cointet brothers who are already in a position of control because of their money. Glory and wealth elude David as he succumbs to the pecuniary strength of others.

The pervasive influence of money becomes apparent when the driving force for scientific research is pecuniary gain; that is, when only research which shows a strong promise of monetary reward is undertaken. Lucien Chardon's father, for instance, concentrates his efforts on finding a cure for gout, not out of a desire to eradicate the disease, but to become wealthy by selling the remedy to the afflicted rich. Besides the contaminating effect of money on science, which can be seen in determining what investigation is undertaken, research is further curtailed since it is carried out in the utmost secrecy to prevent any encroachment on the profits. Rather than open cooperation and a sharing of ideas for the betterment of humanity, scientists work in isolation and keep their results hidden from others. In the case of Chardon, the secret of the cure for the gout, which he was near to implementing, dies with him. The novel portrays the loss to humanity as less important than the loss of wealth to the Chardon family.

David knows the importance of keeping his paper fabrication research hidden; his own father spies on him, and given the opportunity, old Séchard would steal the process. However, it is Boniface Cointet "dévoré par la soif des richesses et des honneurs" (IP 572) who successfully manipulates people and events so that, in the end the glory and wealth (due David for his scientific genius and arduous toil) go to him. Whereas the honest David is not lured to money for personal gain, the opposite is depicted in Cointet, who is prepared to perform whatever deceitful actions are necessary to achieve his goals. Cointet manipulates the gift when he gives Ève some cutlery and a shawl to smooth their relations; these "gifts" are a payment aimed at appeasement to facilitate further exploitation rather than a gesture of goodwill. Cointet's strength comes from his superior financial position and his ability to manipulate the greed of others, such as Petit-Claud and Cérizet (one of David's employees). Petit-Claud willingly participates in the orchestration of Cointet's triumph over David; in exchange Petit-Claud is promised an ugly wife whose money and social connections will advance his career. (It is another example of a woman given in the guise of gift but who is actually a commodity exchanged in a business transaction among men "*donnant donnant*" [IP 674] in order for men to achieve their goals.) Cérizet profits from David's generous help both in Paris and in Angoulême, but enticed by promises of personal gain from Cointet, he betrays David rather than sending the gift back in his direction. Cérizet's deceit enlarges the image of David as the kindhearted benefactor especially when he brushes aside Ève's perspicacious suspicions: "Cérizet?... il me doit d'être tout ce qu'il est! . . . Les belles âmes arrivent difficilement à croire au mal, à l'ingratitude, il leur faut de rudes leçons avant de reconnaître l'étendue de la corruption humaine" (IP 569-70). David is immune to any personal desire for monetary gain (except in order to be in a position to pass it on) and typically remains blind to the treachery of others.

David's contribution to science results more from his perseverance (which resembles quiet, mechanical plodding) than from any special genius. As with the literary gift, the output of the scientific gift created for the benefit of others requires persistent effort. David succeeds in passing on the gift of the paper fabrication process and expresses satisfaction that he has bestowed a gift to society: "que suis-je relativement à mon pays?... Un homme. Si mon secret profite à tous, eh bien, je suis content!" (IP 716). Nonetheless, money triumphs over science: the glory and wealth due David go to Cointet. The stress exerted by monetary manipulation is a greater price than David and Ève are willing to pay to remain active. David renounces his energetic dedication to invention and withdraws into a vegetative, bourgeois existence.

Woman as an Artist

The gifted people in Balzac's novels, whether painters, novelists, poets, sculptors or scientists, like those in the first half of the nineteenth century which he is representing, are usually men. Whereas Joseph Bridau and Pierre Grassou seek instruction in the hope of making a career of painting, the girls who gather for lessons in Servin's studio, in *La vendetta*, are there to refine their overall education. Ginevra is a young woman who shows talent, but it is never suggested that she might become a great artist. She produces nothing original and is unable to maintain a subsistence level of existence from painting copies and portraits. The notable exception to the predominance of males as gifted characters is the actress (for example, Coralie, in *Illusions perdues*, and Josépha, in *La cousine Bette*); but the actress, who may sometimes receive fame through the display of her art, invariably suffers a degradation in her status as a woman in the patriarchy. The position of honour for women (as already seen in the first chapter) is held by the virgin, who is exchanged on the marriage market for her beauty, wealth and/or title; she becomes the virtuous non-circulating wife, a route closed to the actress whose career necessitates her role as courtesan to a wealthy man. One of the main roles of woman in the patriarchy is to nurture the child, and Véronique, in *Le curé de village*, glorifies the role of woman as a nurturer. Woman is compared to the gifted person, such as the artist, who passes on the gift through his work:

> le génie auquel nous devons les belles oeuvres des artistes, des poètes, et qui chez la femme existe, mais sous une autre forme, elle est destinée à créer des hommes et non des choses. Nos oeuvres, à nous, c'est nos enfants! Nos enfants sont nos tableaux, nos livres, nos statues. Ne sommes-nous pas artistes dans leur éducation première? (CV 692)

The problem with the comparison (although meant to be positive) is that it leaves woman in the subordinate position of the person behind the scenes capable of developing and inspiring others but incompetent of assuming the main rôle.

Félicité des Touches, the gifted woman in *Béatrix*, is independently wealthy and thus escapes life as a courtesan, but she is excluded from mainstream respectability since she is the author of plays and novels; being an author detracts from a woman's femininity in the society represented. In *La petite soeur de Balzac: Essai sur la femme auteur*, Christine Planté describes the impossibility during the period of adhering both to the image of a true woman and an author simultaneously. While a woman was capable of inspiring a writer, it was believed she lacked the ability for critical analysis and the necessary intelligence and artistic creativity to be an author of anything significant. Therefore, if something of worth was produced by a woman, she was categorized as virile. Because of society's attitude, it was common for women to write using a pseudonym; thus Aurore Dupin adopted the name of George Sand, and in the novel, Félicité des Touches, modeled in part after the former, becomes Camille Maupin. In describing Félicité, the narrator comments: "Elle n'eut d'ailleurs rien de la femme auteur" (Bx 699), not to deny her possession of the artistic gift, but to remove her from the negative connotations typically ascribed to female writers during the period. The novel creates an overall image of Félicité as a loving, nurturing, generous woman who is very feminine; that is, distanced from the stereotype of the virile female author.

It is more than being an author that ostracizes Félicité; she shows a flagrant disregard for the patriarchy and retains her independence rather than entering the marriage market and subjecting herself to male domination. Because she goes against established social laws, Grimont, the Breton priest, describes her initially as "une femme de moeurs équivoques . . . Cette impie . . . [qui] déshonore son pays" (Bx 676-78). There is a strong contrast between this condemnation of a female writer and the encouragement given the male writer Lucien, in *Illusions perdues*, who would have brought honour to his native town if he had developed and used his talent for a literary career. An indication, nevertheless, of the changing times appears in that, although Félicité is scorned in her native Brittany, where traditional values are portrayed as still firmly entrenched, she is greatly admired in Nantes and Paris, where she is considered "la gloire de la Bretagne" (Bx 763).

Later Grimont reverses his opinion of Félicité calling her "une sainte et une vertueuse personne" (Bx 835), but this is because she conforms to the patriarchal rules that govern a woman's behaviour. The independent woman and author is replaced with the woman who gives a large sum of money to the church and finally withdraws to a convent. The loss to the literary world seems irrelevant; the silencing of this literary genius is considered a victory by those, such as Grimont, in traditional society. Despite her artistic achievements--plays, novels, operas--Félicité tells Calyste that if she had her life to relive she would choose to be like his mother. Félicité's regrets can be explained by the prevailing sentiment of the day that the ideal woman was a devoted mother and wife. Although Balzac saw many problems with the subordination of women in the male-dominated society he inhabited, he strongly supported the patriarchal family unit as a necessary foundation for maintaining order.

When Félicité contemplates marriage, it is out of love for Calyste. After she realizes the impossibility of their union because Calyste loves Béatrix, Félicité demonstrates her love and excessively generous nature by continuing to give to him. First, she develops a set of cunning manoeuvres to make Béatrix love Calyste. These fail largely because Calyste's infatuation renders him incapable of following Félicité's instructions concerning Béatrix. Next, she tries to find happiness for Calyste through marriage to one of her relatives, Sabine de

Grandlieu; the incentive for the Grandlieu family is the money Félicité offers. (Sabine is another example of a woman as a commodity for sale on the marriage market.) When the marriage contract is ready to be signed, Calyste refuses Félicité's gifts, and it is only after reading her letter that he agrees to accept them. The gift functions here as evidence of the bonds which exist between Félicité and Calyste. Adopting the role of a mother, who has provided his intellectual development and now wants to secure his material well-being, Félicité appeals to him to recognize their ties. Rather than seeking gratitude for what she gives, she is requesting a gift (that is, Calyste's public recognition of their loving relationship): "Manquerez-vous de générosité?" (Bx 841). She further assures his acceptance by declaring that the gifts are meant for his children and for the preservation of his old noble family name rather than for him. Later, Félicité makes Sabine the heiress of the rest of her fortune to secure the material well-being of the young woman. She feels guilty about having sacrificed Sabine to Calyste, but her goal in giving to Sabine is better explained as an indirect gift to Calyste. Whereas it is difficult to get Calyste to be more accepting, Félicité encounters no resistance in giving to Sabine, a relation. (The idea that the gift circulates most freely within a family is developed further in Chapter 2.)

Conclusion

Conflict arises repeatedly, especially in Balzac's novels, between the power of money and the efforts of the gifted person to pass on the results of his gift--artistic endeavours are frequently thwarted due to the overwhelming importance attributed to the pecuniary elements in society as a whole. Both Balzac and Stendhal strongly condemned the domination of money. A newspaper article written in 1830 contains Balzac's lament about the pusillanimity of the period and the negative impact of money on society: "Les lois, les écrits, les moeurs puent l'argent. . . . La puissance argent nous mène à la plus triste des aristocraties, celle du coffre-fort."[8] Stendhal's antagonism to the changes occurring is expressed in *D'un nouveau complot contre les industriels* (1825). He does not oppose industry, whose meaning for Stendhal in the article can be equated to economic activity, but he does denounce money as an exclusive goal or as the sole criterion for the assessment of an individual. Stendhal contrasts the lack of the industrialist's heroism with the valour of someone risking his life, such as an explorer or an individual engaged in a political cause. The person prepared to sacrifice his life for his principles merits admiration while the industrialist, who does not even sacrifice his money, is devoid of esteem. For example, the industrialist participates in reprehensible schemes (such as supplying the means necessary to crush a popular revolt) in order to benefit himself economically. The question is how can you honour anyone whose only greatness lies in the enormity of his monetary wealth?

During the Renaissance, merchants who could read and write were friends of the humanists, but by the nineteenth century, to be a merchant was to honour money ahead of everything else. Many of the artists in the novels studied in this chapter are from the bourgeoisie, and yet, at the same time, they represent the utmost contempt for this class. The bourgeois in the novels typically does not recognize true artistic talent, withholds his money from work worthy of sponsorship and thus becomes a force hostile to the gift; only the noblest and strongest of the gifted artists (such as Joseph Bridau) do not succumb to the pressures.

For both Stendhal and Balzac, a distinct separation exists between the gift of the artist and money. A newspaper article from 1828, which Fernand Rude believes reflects Stendhal's ideas and was likely written by him, notes the stifling effect of money upon art: "Les arts eux-mêmes n'ont pu se préserver de la contagion, et sont devenus objets de commerce. Dès lors, adieu leurs progrès, car l'amour de l'argent ne fera jamais de vrais artistes; ceux-là ne se nourrissent que d'indépendance et de pauvreté."[9] Stendhal saw the U.S.A. as a cultural wasteland devoid of music, painting, literature and sculpture. For him, this proved that art is eliminated when money becomes the focal point of existence. He recognized that a certain level of income was necessary to give the artist the leisure essential for his creativity, but he adamantly rejected the bourgeoisie's interest in wealth and its association with honour through the power exerted by its money. Balzac demonstrated the same separation as Stendhal between the artist and money in numerous novels, and he discussed it further in a newspaper article in 1830: "l'avarice est la mort du génie: il faut dans l'âme d'un créateur trop de générosité pour qu'un sentiment aussi mesquin y trouve place. Son génie est un don perpétuel. . . . tout homme doué par le travail, ou par la nature, du pouvoir de créer, devrait ne jamais oublier de *cultiver l'art pour l'art lui-même*."[10]

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[8] Honoré de Balzac, "Complaintes satiriques sur les moeurs du temps présent," *Oeuvres complètes de Balzac*, Tome 22: *Oeuvres diverses* (Paris: Club de l'honnête homme, 1956) 261.

These beliefs expounded by Stendhal and Balzac are precursors to the ideas expressed in the literary theory of Pierre Bourdieu. Portrait painters, such as Balzac's Grassou and Stendhal's Féder, fall into the field of large-scale production in which the artist's goal is to make money by catering to the dictates of the bourgeoisie. Balzac promoted the true artist as the one who concentrates exclusively on art and makes a gift of his talent to posterity in the form of his work; however, to some extent, he himself was in the large-scale production category since he produced many novels aimed at the commercial market. Balzac needed the profit from the sale of his books to survive whereas Stendhal often had other income. Stendhal wrote to express ideas which he hoped would be appreciated by future generations, who would be more receptive to his thoughts than his contemporaries. His typical unconcern about a commercially viable market positions him in Bourdieu's field of restricted production in which heteronomous forces are ignored, and the artist thus asserts his autonomy.

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[9] Fernand Rude, *Stendhal et la pensée sociale de son temps* (1967; Brionne: Montfort, 1983) 171.

[10] Honoré de Balzac, "Des artistes" 225, 232.

Although the decline of patronage meant economic hardship for many artists, Bourdieu explains how it also signaled their liberation. Whereas artists formerly were often obliged to conform to the wishes and imposed morality of patrons who specified the subject of the art including details of its execution, artists in the nineteenth century enjoyed independence in selecting what to do and how. Copying (which had been encouraged) and the obligatory rules of Classicism were replaced with the originality and freedom of Romanticism. The unfortunate result, of course, was lack of funding for what was produced. In the novels, characters, such as Joseph Bridau, Daniel d'Arthez and other members of *le Cénacle*, are unwilling to sacrifice their artistic principles for monetary gain, which would place them in Bourdieu's field of restricted production. Fulgence Ridal (a member of *le Cénacle* who appears briefly in *Illusions perdues*) demonstrates the limited audience for the cultural products at the summit of the artistic hierarchy. He is seen "ne jetant sur le théâtre que ses productions les plus vulgaires, et gardant dans le sérail de son cerveau, pour lui, pour ses amis, les plus jolies scènes" (IP 316). Although economic necessity forces him into the field of large-scale production, he tries to minimize it. It is a means by which to support his true interest in pure art which only he and his fellow artists can truly appreciate.

When those in the field of restricted production distance themselves from awards and money which for them signal failure in the realm of pure art, Bourdieu refers to it as "the economic world reversed".[11] This shunning of prizes is neither typical of Balzac's artists, such as Joseph Bridau, nor of Stendhal's Féder; however, the awards in the novels reinforce the ineptitude of society's authorized institutions to appropriately recognize talent. With the exception of Hippolyte Schinner, one of Balzac's early artists, honours and money are absent, or show an unacceptable slowness in arriving or are misdirected to unworthy individuals. For instance, artists, such as Grassou or Féder, lack the gift but are adept at pleasing the tasteless bourgeois and are honoured. Newspaper critics and academics consecrate the artists in the eyes of the bourgeoisie, but it is only the autonomous artist elite itself which truly has the power to legitimize an artist's work (for example, Grassou versus Joseph Bridau). In the novels the bourgeois are unable to distinguish art which is worthy of praise, which supports Bourdieu's theory that the ability to discriminate art of worth is not a gift distributed throughout a population; rather it is a proficiency which is acquired through exposure which begins at an early age in the family and then is reinforced by the educational system. Since education is under the control of the dominant class, the tendency is to perpetuate the view that the culture of this dominant class is the proper one. The bourgeois art buyer, such as Boissaux in *Féder* and Crevel in *La cousine Bette*, appear to have missed the process of acculturation and no amount of effort or money can obtain it for them.[12] According to Bourdieu, taste in art must flow effortlessly as if natural, even though acquired; once effort is involved, it negates the whole process.

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[11] Pierre Bourdieu, *The Field of Cultural Production: Essays on Art and Literature*, ed. and intro. Randal Johnson (NY: Columbia U, 1993) 164.

[12] Whereas the lack of artistic appreciation magnifies the pretentious image created in the case of a Boissaux or a Crevel, it also increases the sense of despair and hopelessness for Augustine, in Balzac's *La maison du chat-qui-pelote*. Although she studies assiduously in an effort to fit into the artistic world of her husband, she fails. The narrator's comments in this early nineteenth-century short story lend further support to what Bourdieu has theorized in the late twentieth century: the cultural abilities, that Augustine seeks, might be acquired only if the education process is begun at birth. In Augustine's case, it is too late.

The overall impression created by both Stendhal and Balzac is that the artist and scientist make invaluable gifts, but these gifts typically do not receive appropriate recognition. The fault is largely attributed to the contaminating influence of money in the hands of the bourgeoisie. This group holds the power but is unable to decipher worthy artistic and scientific pursuits. Because it measures everything in monetary terms, the contributions of the gifted person are usually neglected. While this is a cause for concern because of the degradation of society which it signals, the mere existence of gifted characters in the novels is an indication of the hope that the situation might be corrected. A strong message is conveyed by the characters who remain resolved to persevere in their struggle to pass on their gift through their cultural products in spite of the ingratitude and hardships they encounter. Balzac and Stendhal became increasingly pessimistic about their society's treatment of the gifted artist and scientist; Stendhal, however, remained optimistic that the situation would be rectified by future generations.

Conclusion

Stendhal and Balzac are very different authors, but close parallels exist between the ways in which they represent the function of gift exchange. Both were influenced by the Enlightenment and Romanticism and wrote during a period when it was apparent that society had turned away from a communal focus where duties were emphasized over rights and self-interest. The fundamental distaste of both Stendhal and Balzac for the power of money, which they saw as infiltrating all facets of life, and the alternatives they advocated, which are tied to the gift, surface repeatedly in their writing. In the work of these authors, the gift clearly functions to form bonds in a process by which the giver feels a desire to help another, and the recipient in turn feels obligated to the giver. A sense of well-being and cooperation arises between the giver and the recipient. However, when one of their characters attempts to capture the positive energy associated with gift exchange in order to further his own self-interest, his plans go amiss and he typically fails. The façade of the gift destroys the possibility of forming bonds and a relationship of trust and love; as a result, hostility, resentment, fear, resignation or other negative sentiments form within the gift-recipient. The gift thus functions in the novels of Stendhal and Balzac to mount a criticism of the growing importance of money in the early nineteenth-century society represented. True gift builds relationships that are portrayed as being of worth, while gift that is a camouflage for payment ruins a potentially fruitful liaison. Situations in which a character displays an irrepressible desire to concentrate on his own self-interest typically end in misery or at the very least exemplify the shallow existence of the character in contrast to the fullness of life he forfeits. Gift and commercial transactions are distinct entities: if the primary focus is self-interest or if any negotiation occurs, it is not a matter of gift. Crossing from the non-monetary gift to a commercial transaction (which by definition in the novels emphasizes self-interest) causes a contamination of relationships.

The gift in the writings of Balzac and Stendhal is similar to the gift as interpreted by Mauss and those who have built upon his work, in so far as a distance always separates the gift from economic considerations, but in other respects the situations are different. According to Mauss, primitive groups give with the express purpose that their gift will create sentiments of obligation in the recipient and foster an aura of peaceful coexistence, but in the novels I have selected, the gift operates differently. In the novels, the gift, a statement of affection or of recognition made by one character towards another, is tied to a genuine concern for another and a desire to benefit the other character. Any attempt to place a character under an obligation is equated with self-interest and removed from the domain of gift exchange. There are exceptions, but they represent a utopian ideal rather than reality. For example, Benassis's (MC) abundant gifts are intended to put others under an obligation, but he has no desire to profit personally. From one perspective, his goal to develop the area economically and his reliance upon money as an incentive to get the citizens to work energetically has a strong self-interested commercial component. On the other hand, his own interests are not important; his goal is to create a system of generalized exchange by which the gift circulates and a sense of community is formed. When put in circulation to benefit a community, money in Balzac's writing serves a positive purpose. The opposite effect results when money is hoarded by a character such as old Pingret (CV), Rouget (R), Grandet (EG) or Séchard (IP); their concentration on accumulation causes them and those around them to miss many of the joys of life.

Another difference between Mauss's interpretation of the gift amongst primitive groups and Stendhal's and Balzac's representations of the gift in early nineteenth-century French society centres around the concept of superiority. In primitive society, a continuous contest to prove one's superiority through abundant gifts by which one's affluence is displayed has positive connotations: it is an effective means of redistributing wealth and building peaceful relations. For instance, the ceremony and celebration linked to the potlatch provide a noble, joyous image. In the novels however, efforts to demonstrate one's superior riches are linked to bourgeois ostentation as Veblen would theorize at the end of the century. A mockery is made of inept bourgeois attempts to impress others; for the bourgeois everything has a price, and the gift becomes equivalent to a payment. For instance, gifts to a courtesan are a means of flaunting patriarchal wealth through the display of an expensive possession/woman.

Overall, the misery to which women are subjugated by the patriarchal system does not erase their giving nature; most female characters continue to be abundant givers despite the cruelty which they endure. Although elements of indoctrination are sometimes present (that is, they are conditioned by the patriarchy to give), for the most part, nurturing and giving seem natural to the women represented in the novels. Female characters as givers often play a pivotal role in the development of a giving spirit within male characters. Mme de Rênal (RN), Armance (A), Marie (C) and Esther (SM) give wholly and spontaneously, whereas a woman's example of gift and a period of incubation precede giving from their counterparts (Julien, Octave, Montauran and Lucien). A woman's gift also serves as the impetus for Benassis (MC) to undertake his developmental project founded upon gift. In the case of Herrera (SM), no attachment to a female character exists, but he is exposed to Esther's gift to Lucien, and for him, the gift undergoes a long period of incubation.

Contamination of the gift often centres around characters who revere money. Payments and bribes are camouflaged by them so that they outwardly appear like gifts in order to enhance their reception. The character gives with the semblance of caring and kindness to favourably dispose another toward an action which will further the giver's self-interest. The presence of self-interest as the primary motivation removes what is given from the realm of gift and reveals the gift to be part of a commercial negotiation. In the first chapter, I discuss several examples of marriages in the novels that appear to involve gift-giving. Typically, however, there is only a pretense of gift; the givers are actually pursuing a form of capital--beauty, social status, financial or some combination of these--which will benefit them personally: Hector (CB) seeks beauty capital; Philippe (R) and Pierquin (RA) social status; Graslin (CV) financial capital; Boissaux (F) and Rênal (RN) beauty and financial capital. In the marriage negotiations, a woman passes from a proprietor father to a proprietor husband, all in the guise of gift. This process obliterates any possibility of establishing a loving and giving relationship; the woman remains enslaved to the patriarchy and is well aware that any attempt to escape her bondage will be met with inflexible and severe social censure. Mme de Rênal (RN) and Valentine (F) are examples of virtuous characters trapped in loveless marriages; they are torn between a desire to give themselves to the man they love and a belief that they must remain faithful to the role of an uncirculating wife to which they have been assigned in the patriarchy.

In the novels and short stories I have selected, Stendhal's women do not lose in virtue when they go against the patriarchy; instead, they gain in strength and purity. Neither Lamiel, who rejects patriarchal sexual taboos, Mme de Rênal who has extramarital sexual relations, nor Mathilde who is pregnant and unmarried, is portrayed as immoral. In his novels, Balzac shows sympathy for women who are economically dependent upon men, but the place of honour for women is held by the suffering, giving, non-circulating wife such as Adeline (CB). Béatrix (Bx), a wife who openly circulates, lacks the kind, giving nature Balzac bestows upon his more sympathetic characters; she regrets her deviation from the patriarchal rules and is eventually reunited with her husband. In the same novel, Calyste is likewise returned to his spouse, and the family unit which ranked so highly in Balzac's value system is preserved. Julie d'Aiglemont (FT), a wife who circulates in a more discreet manner, is kind and giving (unlike Béatrix), but she is punished through the death of a beloved child born of an adulterous relationship and through mistreatment by another. While Balzac treats the favouritism she shows the children that are a product of a love relation as understandable, he does not condone it. In Balzac's novel, the blame for the hardship encountered by the child born out of duty lies mainly with Julie, the mother who has not adequately fulfilled her obligations. Véronique (CV) is a kind and giving character (like Julie) and she too is punished for her deviation from the patriarchal code of behaviour: her lover is executed and she subjects herself to a relentless scheme of penitence to escape eternal damnation. Valérie (CB) reigns victoriously for a time over several men, but ultimately she is punished severely. (When Stendhal's Mme de Rênal dies, it is not from a horrible, disfiguring disease such as Valérie suffers. She is the mother surrounded by her children who is given repose from the struggle of which she is weary; her death is not represented as a punishment.) Even Balzac's portrayal of the talented female writer Félicité (Bx) underlines Balzac's bias for the role of woman as the devoted, giving mother and uncirculating wife. Success in the literary world and economic independence do not translate into happiness for Félicité. If she had her life to relive, Félicité would choose to be a devoted mother and wife. Because she is childless and husbandless, her life holds no value and she withdraws to a convent.

Although the majority of Balzac's female characters suffer a cruel servitude or punishment, some exceptions can be found. One element which frequently recurs amongst the couples who find happiness is the lack of self-interest on the part of either party. Each is prepared to become a gift to the other. The exchange of rings between Marguerite and Emmanuel (RA) is symbolic of this giving. Balthazar, Marguerite's father, is not truly involved in the selection of a husband for either Marguerite or Félicie; he is only requested, out of respect for his position as father, to approve a decision already made by Marguerite. In the novels, whenever a father actively pursues what he sees as an advantageous marriage for his daughter, it usually ends in her unhappiness. Goriot and Sauviat have the best of intentions in giving their accumulated wealth to buy husbands for their daughters, but they fail to secure their contentment. The future looks bright for Césarine Birotteau (B) even though her father participates assiduously in her marriage arrangements, but that is solely because César's bankruptcy makes Crottat seek a financially more attractive bride. César's honesty makes him reverse course; initially, he pursues his daughter's self-interest but changes to protect Anselme's interests. The marriage Anselme desires is thus threatened, and it is only by forcing César away from his commercial bias that the latter is finally persuaded to put aside questions of self-interest and agree to his daughter's marriage to Anselme, a character who has proven his generosity and love through his gifts. Hippolyte Schinner and Adélaïde Leseigneur (La b), another couple to obtain a happy union, also choose one another. Self-interest and paternal involvement are absent; Adélaïde's mother is merely asked to give her approval for a decision that has already been made in the hearts of the young lovers.

Business transactions occurring outside the realm of marriage also often appear as a desire for gift exchange but are motivated by the giver attempting to harness the positive forces of gift exchange to further his own self-interest. On a superficial level, Rouget (R) gives generously to Flore, but it is always with the strict intention of making her the servant of his money. His treatment of his son, Jean-Jacques, has the same goal: to preserve the fortune he has amassed. His self-interested behaviour prevents the establishment of a gift-giving relationship through which Flore might be incorporated into the family and erects barriers to his son's and Flore's happiness. A similar failure to create bonds occurs in *Lamiel*; Mme Hautemare contaminates the gift by her intent to profit from what she gives. Lamiel recognizes that she is not accepted as a member of the Hautemares' family when Mme Hautemare demands to be repaid for what she has done for Lamiel and reminds Lamiel of her adoptive status. Through gift exchange, Lamiel might have been truly included in the family, but because Mme Hautemare keeps their relationship on a commercial level, Lamiel remains distanced from the inner gift-giving family circle.

Montcornet (P) is another character whose plans go awry. Beneath his outwardly generous behaviour lies his scheme (which is inextricably tied to his own self-interest) to persuade the peasants to acquiesce. Montcornet endeavours to install himself as a respected noble who governs his domain, but the peasants consider him a usurper and refuse to grant him that status. The novel contains many examples of the peasants' parasitic nature and their attempts to siphon riches from Montcornet and Mlle Laguerre, the previous owner of his land. Balzac describes the jockeying for position in society on the part of the nobility, the bourgeoisie and the peasants, portraying the bourgeoisie (who triumph) in a particularly unfavourable light. Montcornet attempts to make peace with the peasants and through his gifts/payments does improve their lot somewhat; however, the peasants are worse off after any dealings with the bourgeoisie.

Stendhal and Balzac both use the gift to demonstrate the contamination brought to art by bourgeois values. As the father and prospective son-in-law hide their self-interest in marriage negotiations behind the façade of gift, so too does the bourgeois art collector. Boissaux (F), Vervelle (G) and Crevel (CB) would have others believe that they are gift-bearing patrons of the arts, but they are not. The affluence of the nobility is no longer available to support art as it did in previous centuries, and bourgeois wealth, which steps in to fill the void, falls far short of adequate patronage. Both Stendhal and Balzac create characters who are unable to distinguish art worthy of financial support and misdirect the funding to characters, such as Féder (F) and Grassou (G), who lack true artistic gift. Rather than concern for the arts, the "patrons" are fixated on their own interests; their goal is increased social prestige through the ostentatious display of their expenditures. In a society in which everything is measured in terms of money, the place of honour which should go to the gifted artist--who represents a kind of new nobility created in the novels--goes to the wealthy, inept bourgeois. Money is the means by which merit is recognized in a capitalist society but is denied to the artist. On one hand, the lack of money is the major obstacle encountered by the artist and scientist, but on the other hand, an abundance of money in the case of Lucien (IP) and Raphaël (PC) diverts energy away from the artistic gift, which they then abandon. While a certain level of income is required to enable the artist to continue his work, if self-interest becomes a primary focus the gift is doomed: once money is obtained, the objective is fulfilled, and the gift is no longer developed. In the novels, when art or science succumbs to money, the outcome is represented as a loss. The artist (such as Joseph Bridau [R] and Daniel d'Arthez [IP]) who perseveres despite the lack of rewards represents a meritorious ideal. It is he who resists the monetary forces that invade and dominate all aspects of society; he refuses to let money be his primary objective and steadfastly develops his gift. Given the strong determination of the ideal artist, the gift has the power in the novels to overcome the impediments erected by the bourgeoisie with its emphasis on money. In a society centred around economic interests, the gifted artist or scientist becomes a resistance to the degradation resulting from self-interest. The artistic creation has intrinsic value which contrasts sharply with the commercial value to which the bourgeois reduces art. As represented in the works of Stendhal and Balzac, artistic creation is heterogeneous and important in and of itself. The bourgeois buyer, in whom wealth is concentrated in early nineteenth-century France, is attracted by a form of pseudo-art closely resembling economic production; the ungifted artist turns out a multitude of homogeneous pieces aimed at the bourgeois market rather than at artistic worth.

In addition to the resistance to pecuniary interests offered by the selfless nurturing of women and the valiant struggle of the artist and scientist, the gift in the form of self-sacrifice, as represented by Stendhal and Balzac, also functions to provide a strong critique of economism. Characters such as Julien (RN) and Lucien (SM) choose death rather than the pursuit of success as defined by bourgeois values. Their sacrifice bestows a nobility and legitimacy upon them and serves as an antidote to bourgeois contamination; the dominance and power of money in society is rejected. A primary trait often common to sympathetic characters created by Stendhal and Balzac is a detachment from money; it seems a prerequisite in the novels for admittance into an aristocracy of character.

I have argued that the gift facilitates the formation of bonds but that any attempt by a character to enhance his own self-interest by masking payments as gifts destroys the possibility of an enduring human alliance; however, rare exceptions can be found. Is the force of the gift so strong that the mere semblance of it under certain circumstances in the novels can lead to the transformation of a spurious gift-giving act into true gift-giving? Indeed, an intriguing conversion occurs in some instances whereby a commercial arrangement begun in the guise of gift in the novels has similar results as those which would be expected in a gift-giving situation; that is, the bonds that form are inexplicable outside a gift relationship. For instance, Crevel (CB) initially seeks to retaliate against Hector Hulot by luring Valérie away from him just as Hector took Josépha from Crevel.

After repeated expenditures upon the woman/commodity selected solely as a means to procure his vengeance, Crevel becomes attached to her. Remnants of a commercial transaction still surface in the negotiations whereby Crevel attempts to limit Valérie's monetary gain and to institute some measure of security that she will not abandon him, but in the end, Crevel capitulates to Valérie's demands: the force of his love for Valérie triumphs over the importance he attributes to money. From one perspective, Crevel is still purchasing Valérie (the purchase price has only escalated far beyond that originally anticipated by Crevel) but the element in the equation that has been radically altered is self-interest: Crevel no longer places his own monetary self-interest first.

A similar transformation occurs in the case of Herrera. Lucien (like Valérie) is selected as a vehicle by which to obtain vengeance. No limits are imposed on the expenditures in terms of either money or human lives that Herrera is prepared to make in order to mould his tool (Lucien) and achieve success through him. The gifts showered upon Lucien are initially not true gifts; they comprise part of the financial agreement by which Lucien sells his soul to Herrera in exchange for wealth and social status. As the association progresses, however, Lucien's position changes from that of a tool to one of an idolized son. The element of self-interest is extinguished: Herrera focuses his total attention upon Lucien out of a genuine concern for the young man. The characters (Valérie and Lucien) who receive the gifts/payments do not develop the same attachment to the givers. From the perspective of the recipient, it is a matter of a commercial transaction. Bonds are initiated on the side of the giver, and it is only after what has been given becomes recognized as a gift that hints of bonding appear in the recipients: Valérie does not abandon Crevel, and Lucien attempts to remedy any harm he may have caused Herrera. In the novels, the giver manifests much stronger sentiments of attachment.

Another example of a business transaction which turns into a gift exchange involves Valérie and Lisbeth. Each initially associates with the other purely out of self-interest for what the other can do to further her goals, but the items (such as the furniture) which Valérie gives to Lisbeth in the guise of gift and the mutual aid they provide one another become transformed into a gift-giving situation which sees the two women firmly bonded to one another in a caring relationship. The strength of the ties can best be explained by the flow of the gift which circulates back and forth between Valérie and Lisbeth; the flow between Crevel and Valérie and between Herrera and Lucien is basically uni-directional with very little, if anything, traveling toward Crevel or Herrera. For the firm bonding of one character to another, to receive is insufficient: the character must also be a giver.

The gift as represented by Stendhal and Balzac reveals some of the social problems of early nineteenth-century France: the subordination of women to rigid patriarchal rules; the inequitable distribution of wealth; the disintegration of the family unit; the fragmentation of what is perceived as a previously cohesive society; and the lack of support and recognition given to the gifted artist and scientist. Besides revealing these problems, the gift also serves as a solution, albeit often a partial one. The message conveyed by the gift in the writings of Stendhal and Balzac in the early nineteenth century is similar to that contained in the arguments of thinkers such as Mauss, Bataille, Baudrillard and Caillé in the twentieth century: something must be done about the degradation brought to a society which emphasizes money to the exclusion of everything else. Gift is the potential means of remedying this situation. It is the gift in the novels of Stendhal and Balzac that plays a fundamental part in the creation of bonds in society and that embodies resistance to the dominant economic order.

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